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ENGAGING WITH CRIME FICTION AS A LITERARY PRACTICE

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A dissertation submitted to the Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for a Masters of Arts in Applied English Language Studies. Supervised by Professor E Cloete.

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ABSTRACT

Crime fiction is literature that has become a point of interest for various groups of people in South Africa. In this dissertation I focus on a group of students from the University of the Witwatersrand in terms of their thoughts and experiences about the crime novel. Their engagement with the genre is a literary practice that they enjoy. This research study establishes why this group of students are drawn to the genre and the ways in which they engage with it. Part of this data emanates from the students' impressions on two South African novelists' works. These novelists are, Deon Meyer who is the author of *Blood Safari* published in 2007, and Roger Smith who is the author of *Mixed Blood* published in 2009.

Key words: Literacy, literary practice, literary fiction, popular fiction, novel, crime fiction, virtual book club.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. I know and accept that plagiarism (i.e. to use another's work and to pretend that it is one's own) is wrong. Consequently, I declare that

- **The research is my own work.**
- **I have correctly acknowledged all direct quotations and paraphrased ideas. In addition I have provided a complete, alphabetized reference list, using the APA method of referencing.**
- **I understand that the University of Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.**

Melusi Ncala

17th day of December 2014

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1:INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

This research study conducted an investigation into students' engagement with crime fiction as a literary practice. This idea grew out of prior research I conducted during my Honours programme at the Wits School of Education (WSoE). That research study answered some questions pertaining to students' literary reading practices involving a group of third and fourth-year English majors who indicated that they do read a variety of books (Ncala, 2012).

My research study was based on ongoing debates in South Africa pertaining to students' literary practices. Within a number of media –print and electronic – parents, journalists and education officials have voiced their discontent and possible solutions to the question of how to instil a culture of reading books among students. One of the people who recently added his voice to the discussion in a *Mail & Guardian* article is Nick Mulgrew. Mulgrew (2012) claims that, "it is becoming readily accepted that South Africans do not read books."[1]He further suggests that South Africans who say they are readers only read magazines and newspapers. But Hartigh (2010) asserts that the barrier to not reading books is a lack of access to resources especially among children living in impoverished communities and not necessarily a choice.[2] Mulgrew's (2012) suggestions for remedying this include "fostering a culture of reading between parents and children" and also sorting out infrastructure problems such as school libraries.[3] Kirkland (2011) believes that in encouraging students to read, they should be given the space to engage with socially relevant books.

Giving credence to Kirkland's opinion is WSoE's librarian Alison Chisholm (cited in Ncala, 2012) who speculates, with regards to students at the University of the Witwatersrand, that the turnaround in their approach to literature can be due to the new socio-political context in the country. Essentially, students are grappling with issues of identity, she says. In agreement with her, people whom I engage with, as well as myself, have been drawn to literature at large because of the manner in which issues of morality, race, gender, sexual orientation,

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1 I acknowledge that using internet or electronic sources may not be the standard in such works, but as a visually impaired person I wish to explain that the computer I use has a screen-reader (a speech programme) that enables me to read the research material I have used and in certain instances these are electronic files or internet articles, hence, there will be instances when I have not provided page numbers, because of the nature of the source. I indicate, where applicable, the URL to these websites throughout this research study. Accessed online from: http://mg.co.za/article/2012-10-19-00-once-upon-a-time-parents-taught, 24.08.2013

2 Accessed online from: http://www.southafrica.info/playyourpart/bookshelf-project.htm, 24.08.2013

3 Accessed online from: http://mg.co.za/article/2012-10-19-00-once-upon-a-time-parents-taught, 24.08.2013

crimes and other societal matters have been raised and discussed in books. Hence, what was established in this interview with Chisholm (cited in Ncala, 2012) is that the students' selection of books is vast. According to her, students "loved" books in the fields of philosophy, politics, religion and also literature – especially novels. This notion was then substantiated further in the data collected from about half of the third- and fourth-year English major students. The participants indicated an interest in genres such as romance, biographical stories, African literature and the genre that forms the basis of this research study, crime fiction (Ncala, 2012).

That research study noted that, within the confines of WSoE, students do read a variety of literary works. It also showed that students were returning to the library not only for academic reasons, but for reasons of enjoyment and also appreciation of literary works that they can relate to. This love for literature has been encouraged by lecturers in the Languages, Literacies, and Literatures Division in collaboration with the WSoE library. Lecturers from the division have been taking students to the library to showcase books and to talk about various genres of novels, including crime fiction. In addition, four large bookcases filled with donated books have been placed under a stair nook outside the Division. These books are permanently accessible and every single student at WSoE can take whichever book takes their fancy. At the same time, the library has created suggestion boxes and conducted surveys in which students can request books that they would like to read.

One argument about the aforementioned research study is that students majoring in English are inclined to have literary practices. But of the participants who indicated that they read literature, the reasons why they were keen on particular works and genres were vast. Reasons given by the students in the research study ranged from "relating to the stories", to enjoying and loving literature. However, in considering these factors, what could not be firmly stated is why other students – apart from the ones taking English – are keen readers of literature too. By realising these factors, I then settled on the idea of exploring what drew students to the crime fiction genre.

Warnes (2012) makes a number of points about this genre in relation to South Africa, which essentially provided the motive to expand on the reasons why students are so fascinated by crime fiction works. Warnes (2012) writes that the crime fiction genre is huge across the world and that at least 40 authors from South Africa have also written books that can be categorised under the genre. Attesting to the impact the genre has had within South Africa,

Naidu (2013) notes in author Mike Nicol's blog, Crime Beat, that 50 crime novels were published by 22 novelists during the past decade. In addition, Naidu (2013: 124) claims that

> the accessibility, popularity, commercial success and, in some cases, the artistic merit of South African crime fiction have captured the attention of critics and literary scholars in South Africa and abroad.

This, in some instances, has led to tertiary institutions offering courses on the genre. Furthermore, the books are published in English and/or Afrikaans and, as Naidu notes

> There are also a growing number of crime thriller novels being written in indigenous African languages, and local publishers, alert to the commercial success of big names like [Deon] Meyer and [Margie] Orford, have shown a willingness to back first-time authors.
>
> (2013: 130)

Even though there are no official figures of who takes an interest, Naidu (2013) observes that the group of people is quite diverse. The reason why the genre is increasing in popularity extends further than storylines being gripping and the characterisation of violent crimes. Warnes (2012: 981) says what cannot be taken out of the equation, is the idea that authors are "[returning] to the figure of the detective as an antidote to disorder, violence, and uncertainty."

The resolution of a crime by a professional or amateur sleuth, which has been coined as "fixing the guilt" by Andersson and Cloete (2006: 123), is why readers of crime fiction are supposedly enthralled by this genre. Readers are seeking some sort of reassurance that there is hope in the midst of criminal atrocities. It is as if the resolution of the crime engages the reader in a kind of social audit. In other words, crime fiction allows readers to seek retribution for "it is also a weapon of … revenge" (Reddy, 1996: 203). Thus, Chisholm's (cited in Ncala, 2012) assumption that students relate to the issues discussed in the books is relevant. More so, the participants' assertions echoed this sentiment, as noted in the research report. The assumption is that they are seeking to grapple with issues of crime that they face daily – be it in the media, conversations with friends and family, or on a personal level.

1.2 Background: Crime Fiction and Its Popularity in South Africa

This section looks at the genre of crime fiction in relation to its conventions and sub-genres. Subsequent chapters will look at the social issues about which authors write. Higginson (2005) dates the origins of the genre to the 1840s when several texts were published, includingEdgar Allan Poe's three Dupin novelettes (*Murders in the Rue Morgue, The Mystery of Marie Roger,* and *The Purloined Letter*) (p.161). The genre during this period dealt with urbanisation as well as the impact of capitalism, i.e. the differences between the ruling-class and the working-class. Joyce (1995) also dates the origins of the genre to the 1800s when a series of novels were published called the Newgate Novels. She says that these novels sought to highlight the crime wave in Britain during that era.

Le Roux (2013) locates the origins of the genre in South Africa in 19th century. However, she is of the view that the works published in the 1890s that are classified as "adventure writing or the imperial romance" by Anglo-African writers, Ernest Glanville and Bertram Mitford, have been given only a brief look by academics. This is regardless of these authors' works having traits of what a crime novel entails. Much of the earlier inattention to the genre in South Africa has been as a result of works being categorised under other genres of literature. This has contributed to the confusion over the origins of the genre in this country.

For the first recognised crime novel in Africa, Le Roux (2013) reverts to *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing* which claims that it was *An Anonymous Spy* by John Macqueen in 1901. Following the forerunners of those early days of the genre, the second wave of authors were prevalent during the 1920s and 1930s. As Le Roux (2013: 138-139) says, this group of writers are "referred to as the 'colonial' as they were largely English-born writers who settled in South Africa and situated their fiction here." These writers, according to Le Roux (2013), had different approaches to their writing. An author, such as "Gordon Gardiner, a Scottish soldier and journalist in South Africa, used this country as a setting for several of his novels, including *The Reconnaissance* and *The Pattern of Chance*"(p. 139).

Another author, "L Patrick Greene, an English author who lived in Rhodesia and later emigrated to the USA, spent comparatively little time in South Africa, but chose to locate all of his novels in South Africa and Rhodesia" (Le Roux, 2013: 139).

Le Roux (2013) details more efforts in local publishing post World War II, although traces of this can be noted during the 1920s and 1930s. CNA (the Central News Agency) is notably instrumental in the publishing of books during that era. As Le Roux (2013: 141) notes, CNA

published under the Dassie Book Imprint, which "lent itself to a mass-market genre like crime fiction, with its small, inexpensive formats, simple two-colour covers, and a wide range of authors and themes."

Malmgren (2001) divides the story of a crime fiction novel into two. He states that there is "the story of the crime and the story of the investigation" (p. 115). As he says, there is the carefully woven plot about the crime which contextualises the setting and the lives of the people who inhabit that area. The other part of the narrative deals with the story of the investigation. In this aspect of whodunits, the tendency by authors is to use first-person narration, which puts the reader into the position that makes him/her part of the detective work that will lead to the resolving of the crime. A reader gets to shed more light into the investigation because for the reader, "prospection takes the place of retrospection" in this suspense filled journey (p. 123). Crucially though, for Malmgren (2001), the detective seeks his/her own justice by making sense of his/her own morality.

South Africa has two main categories into which crime novels are placed – the literary detective novel and the crime thriller novel. Describing the crime thriller novel, Naidu (2013: 127) explains that it "is formulaic, fast-paced, plot-driven, contains more action than detection, is quite violent, and usually ends with a climactic chase or physical show-down."

Whereas, the literary detective novel, according to Black (cited in Naidu, 2013: 130) has an "aesthetic sensibility, technical virtuosity, and authorial self-consciousness." But also as James (cited in Naidu, 2013: 130) says, there is "the art thrill and the thriller thrill at once."

Naidu admits that the subgenre of the literary detective novel has the typical characteristics of the detective novel. There is

> a puzzle or a mystery; a detective figure who sets out to solve the puzzle; psychological analysis; philosophical insights; realism; a sophisticated use of stylistic devices; complex characterisation; and an overall profundity or gravitas associated with what could be called serious or 'highbrow' literature.
>
> (2013: 130)

Classifying the crime novel under the category of popular fiction within the African context, Andersson (2005: 141) states that there is more to works of this genre being "fun", "wacky" and "frivolous."Categorising the genre as popular fiction is due to literature (or the canon) being viewed as a work of fiction that is serious. Ojaide (2009: 1) describes the canon as a

body of literature that is "privileged or given special status, by a culture, [and] these are works that attain the status of classics and are repeatedly discussed, anthologised, or reprinted." When contextualising this notion to the African literary canon, Ojaide (2009) thus proposes that the African canon be viewed as literature that expresses African ideology in terms of African experiences, of which a great deal has its roots in the cultures and traditions of Africa. Ojaide (2009) also believes that in defining the African literary canon, an author's ethnicity or geographical basis should not be included although others may have reservations about the language in which a book is written. In contrast, crime fiction is generally placed within the notion of popular culture. But as Andersson (2005) says, although the genre is seen as light literature, it should also be accepted that it does deal with pertinent matters in Africa. Using Andersson's (2005) and Ojaide's (2009) remarks, I argue that the crime novel can be as serious as other works. What distinguishes the crime novel from other works is its ability to provide its readership with a satisfying resolution to a crime. However, this does not mean that the crime novel lacks value. What is of value or not is a subjective issue and I elaborate on this aspect in the following chapter.

Andersson and Cloete (2006) present a series of waves that African literature has undergone. The first wave brought forth a literature which was characterised by renowned authors – Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe – who wrote accounts that critiqued the colonial era. The second wave was more preoccupied with matters plaguing Africa's post-colonial states. Hence, Cloete and Andersson (2006: 123) state that "the first wave of African literature was the literature of nationalism as response to colonialism and the second wave registered a critique of the nationalist agenda." The third wave however, is underscored by an approach to African literature that is looking to depict a society that places more of an emphasis on healthy relationships amongst community members. Generally, social issues that affect the community such as crime, corruption, violence against women and HIV/AIDS become the focus of "third wave" literary works. Their popularity often rests in the fact that ordinary readers feel that some restitution can be found.

Warnes (2012) endorses the view held by Cloete and Andersson. He maintains that in defining crime fiction as "a body of literature assembled to speculate about social disorder, threats to property and body, and to imagine responses to them," a great deal of popular literature emerging South Africa deals with crime and society's response thereto (p. 982). In Warnes' (2012) account of the genre's popularity in South Africa what should be taken into consideration is that since the advent of democracy a great deal has been happening in the

country. This is not only on a political level. Apart from there being staggering statistics of violent crimes such as murder and rape, novelists seek to characterise the corrupt nature of the institutions that ought to be on the watch out for criminal activities.

Orford (2013) views crime writing in a similar fashion to Warnes (2012) and Andersson and Cloete (2006). In concurring with the latter's' sentiments, she states "the crime novel, if done well, is a way of interpreting the society upon which it focuses its lens" (p. 221). Thus, in Orford's, (cited in Business Day Live, 2013) acknowledgement that the country has undergone "political transformation", she maintains that "there is an underbelly of unresolved rage and conflict."[4] That is why she holds that "crime and excessive violence have largely come to define post-apartheid South Africa" (Orford, 2013: 221). This is not to say that her ability to write novels is typified by a depiction of violence for her experience of crime writing has an emphasis on deep psychological factors, which has become the trademark of her crime novels. As Orford (2013: 221) shares intimate details of her craft, it is learnt that "when [she] started, an unmapped narrative journey: [she)] thought [she] might be able to write [herself] towards an understanding of the meaning of violence and its origins, and to represent possibilities of resilience and some sort of redemption."

As she says, "the focus of [her] novels has been on the intimate effect — emotional as well as physical — of pain that is individual as well as social, a consequence of moral failure and violence" (p. 221).

It is for this very reason that Orford (2013: 226) thinks of crime fiction as a medium that "offers a way of looking at violence, at violation, at death, and surviving, [and] that, at least, is some kind of solace, but it is one that is ethically fraught in its representation of violence." Therefore, Grant-Marshall (2013) sums up Orford's opinion on her contribution to crime writing in South Africa as "a way of looking at how we live with violence, cope with it, keep on going on."[5] Though in this summation the plural pronoun we suggests that this occurs on a broad scale, Orford (2013: 226) is of the opinion that "in South Africa, because of our segregated past, police officers and journalists are the only people who can plausibly navigate through this fractured and stratified society." It is in that in which she has found her primary reason to write within the genre.

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[4] Accessed online from: http://www.bdlive.co.za/life/books/2013/08/20/writing-on-crime-to-dissect-a-violent-sa, 05.09.2013

[5] Accessed online from: http://www.bdlive.co.za/life/books/2013/08/20/writing-on-crime-to-dissect-a-violent-sa, 05.09.2013

Not all authors strive to write with the purpose of highlighting social issues. Differing subtly in opinion to the claims made by Orford (2013), Warnes (2012) and Andersson and Cloete (2006), Deon Meyer (2010) states that he has "no intention of putting in any social or political commentary" in his novels. He merely strives to entertain his readers and it so happens that "you create these characters…you let them loose within a very specific setting."[6] So it stands to reason that a character who is in Cape Town will behave in accordance with his/her environment. It must also be taken into account that the character holds certain cultural beliefs from which he/she views the world.

1.3 Problem and Purpose Statement

This research study is an attempt to establish what intrigues students about crime fiction novels. In doing so, there is an interest as well in finding out how students engage with this genre as a literary practice. By paying attention to details such as what draws students to this genre as well as the analysis of selected South African crime fiction novels, I am hoping to write a report that will encapsulate various aspects of this literature. Using the data and findings of the research report that I conducted for my Honours programme, I was quite certain that more could be done that will have educational and academic significance.

I say this because of the limitations of that previous study. One of these was that the sample group was limited to students majoring in English. Literary practices are not exclusive to that group. When considering the conversations I have had with diverse persons, all of whom expressed a great love for reading books, I have had to reconsider some of the points made within the study. Not only have these people stated that crime – no matter the magnitude – affects them all, but they also were keen readers of crime fiction novels.

As a result, what will be evident in this research study is that I firmly place crime novels under literary works. This means that I am also of the opinion that the literariness of a text (crime fiction in this regard) is reliant on an individual's value thereof. The more highly we think of a text, the more likely we are to argue for its literariness. An aspect of that has to do with how the individual relates to that particular text.

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6 Accessed online from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6_m9RiI5HU, 04.09.2013

Based on that, I discuss the genre's readership's engagement with crime fiction as a literary practice. Literary works, as will be noted in Chapter Two, are novels, poetry, dramas and the like. A literary practice is a reader's engagement with these works. Of course there are a number of questions and ideas that need to be addressed with regards to these concepts.

Another important aspect is with regards to viewing a literary practice as a social activity. To answer this, I resort to looking at the notion of critical literacy as well as views about popular fiction versus literary fiction. These theoretical discussions lead up to a discussion about the genre itself (found in Chapter Three), its history, various subgenres as well as the two South African crime novels. These novels are Roger Smith's *Mixed Blood* published in 2009 and Deon Meyer's *Blood Safari*, which was published in 2007. I have interviewed six participants who have read one of these novels. Going hand in hand with the interviews are virtual book club discussions. This platform was established on Facebook, a popular social networking internet website. The members of this virtual book club were students from a number of faculties at the University of the Witwatersrand. However, the virtual book club discussed general issues relating to crime fiction. Participants of the virtual book club were not required to read any of the prescribed books. All that participants had to do was to share their experiences and thoughts about reading crime novels.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research study are:

- To determine what draws students to crime fiction novels;
- To establish the ways in which students engage with this genre as a literary practice;
- To evaluate whether a virtual book club is a forum that enables or limits crime fiction readers to engage with other readers – this is to determine whether a social network such as Facebook could be utilised as virtual space to have book discussions about crime fiction and;
- To put to the test whether a selection of South African crime fiction novels live up to the expectations of the participants' reasons of what draws them to the genre.

1.5 Research Questions

The main questions to this research study are:

- What draws students to crime fiction novels?
- How do students engage with crime fiction novels?

- Do South African crime novels live up to the participants expectations to what draws them to the genre?
- How (if at all) does using Facebook as a social network enable readers of crime fiction to engage with fellow readers about crime fiction?

1.6 Rationale

The number of authors' novels in post-apartheid South Africa whose work could be categorised under crime fiction, as enumerated by Warnes (2012), made me rethink the genre's position in the country. Questions ranging from who is intrigued by the genre to how novelists write about the country have been at the forefront of my own discussions with friends, fellow students and lecturers. I wondered whether readers consider (or at least relate to) the issues and/or is it the satisfactory solving of a crime that concerns them. I say this because Taylor (2006) claims that these novels "do not suggest a remedy for crime or reassure us that all in the end will be well; [but they allow] us to hope that evil will not go unpunished."[7]

The personal reasons why I wished to investigate these various aspects pertaining to students' engagement with crime fiction as a literary practice are quite simplistic yet truthful. Growing up in an environment in which I was away from home and residing at school, I was exposed to literature that spoke of far distant worlds but which I could never actually relate to. Although I was captivated by these books, for I had an appreciation of stories in general, my interest slowly dwindled and I no longer did much reading.

It would be several years after leaving primary school that I relished to read a novel. But I faced the predicament of not having any particular interest in any genre. By chance I went to a library resigning myself to the idea that I was going to try out a fantasy novel yet again. I was told the title of a book, which incidentally was *Voodoo River* by Robert Crais. Thinking that the novel was about black magic, I took it. That would be the beginning of my love for crime fiction novels for nothing in the book was about fantasy.

Set in the United States of America (USA) in the states of Louisiana and California, the story moves between rural and urban America. A famous television star is trying to get in touch with her biological parents. When hiring a sleuth called Elvis Cole, the trail for her biological

[7] Accessed online from: http://www.shotsmag.co.uk/feature_view.aspx?FEATURE_ID=120, 04.02.2013

parents leads to Louisiana. This part of America is still socially divided with highly prejudicial views and beliefs being practiced. The author tries to illustrate what progress there has been (little). Sexism and racism are the norms for this backward-thinking society. Jody – the famous star – with the assistance of Elvis Cole and his sidekick Joe Pike have to overcome these in their pursuit of the truth about Jody's real parents. This novel has the makings of a typical crime fiction story; there are several twists, one of which is that the expedition to look for Jody's parents ends up with Elvis and Joe uncovering other unrelated crimes, following clues in resolving various mysteries, and finally, providing hope to the reader by reaching some sort of resolution. What stood out for me reading this novel was the bond that Elvis and Joe have. Their friendship is one of honour, loyalty and truth, and they would do just about anything to protect one another (Crais, 1996). Such overwhelming trust within this friendship has led me to think of these characters finding peace and hope in one another on a personal level.

Taylor (2006) may state that what fascinates readers of crime fiction is the violent nature of the murders that take place in these books. But I would not base my interest in this particular book on only that aspect in addition to the friendship factor. Reading *Voodoo River* drew me more to the circumstances that led to the deaths, including the emotions and reasons that motivated people to make certain decisions. The killing of another human leaves lines blurred on whether it was a bad killing or not.

CHAPTER 2:LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter looks at how readers' reading practices develop. It also discusses how reading novels can be viewed as a social practice. The latter of these ideas suggests that reading novels (and in this instance crime novels) is enjoyed socially. But it also highlights that novels can add value to the reading experience. The former deals more with the technical or cognitive aspects of the ideal reader. The chapter therefore first looks at defining literacy. This is followed by a focus on literary reading practices. It concludes with a discussion on what is literary versus what is popular for the genre of crime fiction.

2.1 Literacy and Literary Reading Practices

2.1.1 Literacy

Prior to expanding on the idea of literary reading practices, it is worthwhile to look at an aspect that is integral to the concept, namely literacy. Using UNESCO's (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) definition, literacy is a person's ability to read and write about his/her life. Janks (2010) also acknowledges this definition of literacy. She states that "in common usage, literacy is understood to be the ability to read and write" and, it was "formed as an antithesis to illiteracy" during the 1980s by the Department of Education in South Africa (p. 2). Hill(2009: 3) is one of the scholars who expands on the UNESCO definition, by stating that "literacy is reading, writing, speaking and listening, and involves the knowledge and skills required to engage in activities required for effective functioning in the community."

In providing this definition, Hill (2009) has broadened the scope in which literacy is viewed by adding additional facets. She also acknowledges in her definition that literacy is a social practice.

In interrogating the notion of what it means to be literate or illiterate, Janks (2010) raises pertinent questions about these two terms after discovering that many languages, both within South Africa and abroad, do not have a direct translation for the word "literacy." She asks "what then is the usefulness of the word literacy; why do we need it; [and] does it enable or constrain our thinking" (p. 2)? These questions are worth noting because in the languages in which the word "literacy" is not found, the existing translations attach highbrow status to the definition with terms such as "educated", "schooled" and "well-read" coming to the fore. Guarding against the limitations of these terms, it is perhaps worthwhile to consider other

ideas and approaches to literacy. The concept is definitely far more than being literate or illiterate as suggested by the South African Department of Education of the 1980s that Janks (2010) makes reference to.

In finding alternative voices to that limiting notion, it is prudent to state at this juncture that literacy is not only the ability to decode symbols and letters but it also includes the capacity to derive meaning from the text that one is engaging with. Street (cited in Hamilton, 2000) expands on this by saying that literacy should also be viewed from a broader perspective to encompass not only the attitudes and understandings that individuals have when applying their skills of reading and/or writing. But in addition to that literacy should also include the ideologies that form the basis for these practices. In support of this view, Freebody (2000: 92) says that, "the first aspect of the emergent features of literacy is its effect on the social organisation and the supporting belief systems of the culture in which it develops." On that basis he concludes that "it is hard for us to imagine how we could have organised our most central institutions (educational, legal, political, industrial) without the written word" (p. 92).

In appealing for literacy to be accepted as a social practice, Street (2003) sheds more light on this notion when he distinguishes between the autonomous and the ideological models of literacy. Essentially, what emanates from Street's (2003) approaches to literacy is that underscoring the autonomous model are notions that seek to advance Western-held beliefs of literacy. The ideological model in turn "offers a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices as they vary from one context to another" (p. 77). In drawing more differences between the two models of literacy, Street (2003: 77) suggests that the ideological model "starts from different premises than the autonomous model – it posits instead that literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles."

Gee (1986) adds his voice to what Street says and proposes that literacy be seen as "discourse practices". He claims that "these discourse practices are tied to the particular world views (beliefs and values) of particular social or cultural groups" (p. 720). Adding to that, he maintains that these "discourse practices" are strongly entrenched in the individual's identity to such an extent that in the event that a person's "discourse practice" is altered, his/her identity undergoes a change too. Pahl and Rowsell (2005) also agree with the notion of literacy practice being intertwined with a person's identity as Gee (1986) suggests. However, Pahl and Rowsell further theorise that

> When students write and read, they infuse these practices into their identities [and this is due to] literacy learners [bringing] their identities into the making of meaning, and as they learn to read, or put marks on a page, their cultural experience goes before them, and their marks are inscribed with that experience.
>
> (2005: 10)

In accepting Gee's idea of "discourse practice" when talking about literacy as social practice, it should not be denied that in certain instances, such as those related to academia or educational subjects, the literacy practice tends to be more specific. Johnson, Watson, Delahunty, McSwiggen and Smith (2011: 100) state that "there are particular literacy tools that better serve particular content areas." They label this idea as "disciplinary literacy". Focusing their research towards school based subjects such as mathematics and geography, Johnson et.al (2011) believe that when students sharpen these specific skills and knowledge (disciplinary literacy), they will have a better grasp of their subjects.

In taking all of these opinions into account, there may be reason to consider a view that was expressed more than three decades ago, but still remains true today. Heath (1980: 123) states that "current definitions of literacy held by policy-making groups are widely varied, and they differ markedly in the relation they bear to the purposes and goals of reading and writing in the lives of individuals".

If anything, this perspective should not be limited to policymakers, but should be extended to academics, the media and non-governmental organisations that have a strong voice in education-related matters, for in a diverse country such as South Africa, all spheres of society hold strong views about cultures, traditions and the country's history.

Based on this, Janks (2010) and Freebody (2000) formulated an argument for critical literacy. McKinney (2003) writes that the concept of critical literacy stems from several backgrounds including those of literacy theorist Paulo Freire, who is regarded as highly influential in the field. There is also the school of thought that ties in with the concept of critical language awareness and this originates with Fairclough.

How these two notions differ is that critical literacy advocates for a reader to analytically question the dominant voices in a text, who designed it, for what purpose the text was created, whose interests does it serve, and what are/how are the under-represented groups positioned. Within this framework it is accepted that texts are not neutral and that there are ideologies that are favoured by the designer for whatever reason. A skilled reader is able to apply four key tools, which will be outlined shortly, to be able to think of the texts critically.

Critical language awareness hones in on language and power but using the same theoretical focus points as in critical literacy. The premise of critical literacy is that, "language is entwined in social power in a number of ways: it indexes power, it expresses power, and is involved whenever there is contention over and challenge to power" (Emmitt and Wilson, 2005: 3). As Emmitt and Wilson further state, critical language awareness focuses

> on understanding how language represents power structures in texts in the belief that knowledge about how language works gives students an explicit and tangible point of reference from which to both generalize from and to offer as evidence for what they say in response to their analyses.
>
> (2005: 3)

McKinney (2003: 190) outlines critical language awareness as an idea that, "aims to raise consciousness of the language power and language/society relationship, showing how sociolinguistic practices are 'socially created' and 'socially changeable' ".

Freire (cited in McKinney, 2003: 100) describes critical literacy as "the process in which [people], not as recipients but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality."

Adopting the critical literacy perspective, Janks (2010: 13) articulates her argument for this concept by informing us that Freire states that we ought to "reflect critically on the process of reading and writing itself." This draws our attention to viewing the word as part of our world. Meanwhile, Hill (2009: 38) elaborates on the notion of critical literacy and says that "the critical perspective is similar to social constructivist theory except that critical perspectives acknowledge that the power bases within different socio-political contexts are not equal" and, a reader must be cognisant of this factor. Janks (2010) says "the word critical enters this discourse to mean something different from what we normally understand by 'critical thinking' – an aspect grounded within the humanities or social sciences." She believes that it is more than just testing evidence and weighing up theories in a reasonable manner. In this regard "it is used to signal analysis that seeks to uncover the social interests at work, to ascertain what is at stake in textual and social practices" (p. 12). Hence, Luke and Freebody explain that when engaging in reading, we should be aware that

> All texts are motivated – there is no neutral position from which a text can be read or written…all language, all text, all discourse thus 'refracts' the world; bending, shaping, constructing particular versions and visions of the social and natural world that act in the interests of particular class, gender, and cultural groups.
>
> (1997: 193)

This aspect resonates within crime fiction too. In a subgenre such as the male hard-boiled detective novel for instance, the reader is often told the story from the detective's perspective, which traditionally is a white male who is prone to violent tendencies. The reader, however, is made to sympathise with this character. Quite often the reader approves of this character's actions. But as much as the "reshaping" and "refracting" of texts can be seen in male hard-boiled detective novels, the same can be argued for the female hard-boiled genre. There is an ongoing persistence to cast woman sleuths in a different light to that of their male counterparts. The genre attempts to challenge stereotypes that are commonly found in the male hard-boiled detective genre in which women are depicted as submissive or objects of sex. As noted in Chapter Three, woman are repositioned within society and much of that repositioning is based on women characters being given their independence.

Taking into account that a reader has to be aware of such nuances, Luke and Freebody (1997) agree that a reader should be critically literate. In achieving this level of literacy, a reader of a text should be at a certain level of agency for he/she ought to construct meaning of the world around them. This assertion is based on the idea that readers are exposed to a great variety of resources in varying quantities. Readers gain these experiences in the communities they live in or visit. Hence, the idea presented by Luke and Freebody (1997) is one that suggests that readers of texts deduce meaning and formulate opinions based on these aspects.

Huang (2011) refers to the skills that readers bring to the practice of engaging with texts as competencies. In her assessment of the idea of being a critical reader, she highlights Luke and Freebody's theory by saying that a reader must be able to have the code competency, the semantic competency, pragmatic competency as well as the critical competency. Before elaborating on these important principles, it should be understood that Freebody's (2000) view is that these competencies advocate for an approach that seeks to underscore "one's social role as a reader" (p. 93). Different to this idea is a psychological approach to reading that concentrates primarily on the "skills and abilities" of a reader.

Luke and Freebody (1997: 212) explain that

> psychological approaches to reading entail varied claims about developmental contingency: that if one learns basic decoding then comprehension will follow; that if one learns how to infer and predict, that comprehension will follow; and that if one can display empathy, critical analysis of cultural texts and ideologies will follow.
>
> (1997: 212)

On the other end, a perspective that they favour is "a social practice hypothesis: that one learns to do with reading what one is taught to do and what is valued and encouraged and useful in cultural, interpretive communities" (p. 212). This distinction between the two ideologies essentially is an emphasis on reading practices being viewed from an individual's perspective, i.e. the society that a person finds himself/herself in and the things that he/she is exposed to. The reader takes centre stage as he/she can interrogate what is being read. In contrast, with the "psychological reading process", greater emphasis is placed on a reader paying specific attention to the construction of the text to aid his/her understanding. A reader is inclined to focus on aspects such as pronunciation, units of the alphabet and language structures. This, however, does not mean that the "psychological reading process" fails to meet the ideals of a good reader as it does hone into key aspects such as making inferences, interpretation and eventually reading the text as a whole. But as Luke and Freebody (1997: 215) state, the primary issue is that "many of these psychological reading models have failed to take up the question of 'whose meanings' will count in private and public forums."

Due to this, their concern is that, "where these questions are not raised, classrooms run the risk of a reproductive model of meaning, where teaching comprehension is about cultural assimilation and colonization" (Luke and Freebody, 1997: 215).

Reverting to the reading principles mentioned before, Freebody (2000: 93) refers to the competencies that Huang writes about as "roles" and these are "code-breaker, text-participant, text-user, and text-analyst." With code-breaking, according to Freebody (2000: 94), "to be a successful reader, an individual needs to successfully engage the technology of the written script." In achieving this, a reader would have to familiarise himself/herself with two aspects of the "technology". These are "the nature of the relationship between spoken sounds and written symbols, and the contents of that relationship" (p. 94). Luke and Freebody (1997: 214) state that within this role a reader needs to establish the "patterns and conventions" of a text and also has to determine "how the sounds and the marks relate, singly and in combinations." When that has been achieved the assumption is that the reader will have "cracked the text" and figured out "how it works".

About a reader's "role as text-participant", Freebody (2000: 95) says that he "means developing the resources to engage the technology of the text itself – its meaning and structure." In other words, a reader has a set of ideas and experiences that he/she can use in trying to comprehend a text. A reader has to draw on these thoughts and experiences while

engaging with that text. To aid this process, a reader should ask himself/herself the following set of questions that Luke and Freebody (1997: 214) present:

- How do the ideas represented in the text string together;
- What cultural resources can be brought to bear on this text and;
- What are the cultural meanings and possible readings that can be constructed from this text?

The third of these roles, which is text-user, pertains to "developing and maintaining resources" for participating in "what this text is for, here and now" (Freebody, 2000: 97). In essence, this proposes that composing and reading texts are social acts. Since this is the case, "then being a successful reader is being able to participate in those social activities in which written text plays a central part" (p. 97). A reader learns the ability to discern how he/she should use a particular text and to determine in which circumstance that text would be most effective or appropriate. A reader essentially acquires the know-how to manipulate texts to serve a purpose while being cognisant of the societal aspects at play.

The last of the roles that Freebody (2000) speaks of is text-analyst, which relates to a reader being critical of the texts he/she engages with. A reader needs to be aware that texts are not neutral and that authors are making an attempt to position the reader by echoing certain views and silencing others even though it may be a factual account. Huang (2011: 146) affirms this by describing a text critic as someone who is aware that "texts are not ideologically natural or neutral – that they represent particular points of views while silencing others" and is also someone able to "critically analyze and transform texts."Freebody argues

> For the necessary status of a role for the reader that entails conscious awareness of the language and idea systems that are brought into play when a text is constructed and that make the text operate and thus that makes the reader, usually covertly, into its operator.
>
> (2000: 100)

With crime fiction, it is important for a reader to be aware that authors are inclined to use language that may be sensational to achieve a certain objective. Depending on the subgenre, the more gruesome the crime, the more the author could be aiming to shock his/her readers. Also relevant is that in terms of perspectives, a reader should be conscious of the idea that in most instances the stories are written from the hero's perspective. As a consequence, the reader sympathises more with this individual.

2.1.2 Literary Reading Practices

The previous section highlighted that reading should be seen as a social practice and that to be a "good reader", the section touched on Luke and Freebody's 1997 model of "social roles of a reader." However, what must be reiterated is that the psychological characteristics of what constitutes a good reader were not rejected. In fact, these characteristics were incorporated into the greater scheme of things in which the emphasis is on being a critical reader –thus the term critical literacy. In discussing literary reading practices, this section does so aware of the views and opinions of the scholars cited in this report.

What we can be sure of is that the various ways of defining what the term "literary practice" means and/or what reading practices are is that a literary practice can be defined as a reader's engagement with "literature [which is] those novels, short stories, plays and poems which are fictional and convey their message by paying considerable attention to language which is rich and multi-layered" (Lazar, 1993: 1).

When talking about literary practices, however, we may want to add other non-conventional works to the definition that people engage with such as "video games, movies, music, and magazines" including documentaries and news articles (Hall, 2011: p. 299). In viewing the notion of a literary practice as a term that is flexible and inclusive of all types of readers, Lazar adds that in defining literary works, "we [should] go beyond the traditional literary canon to include contemporary works which recognise that the English language is no longer the preserve of a few nations, but is now used globally" (1993: 5). She bases this on literature being viewed as something that is not stagnant but rather as something that is evolving, for it varies from context to context.

In giving an explanation that expands on the proposed idea of a literary practice, Carter (1986) supposes that "the answer may be a primarily sociological one and lie with the disposition adopted by the reader towards the text" (p. 142). The general acceptance should be that a reader brings to the practice of reading books ideologies that come from his/her societal background. As a result, students' out-of-school reading practices should also be acknowledged in defining literary practices for there is a influx of multimedia texts as well as the integration of diverse social groups within education at present (Danzak, 2011). This is a perspective that resonates in Hall's (2011: 297) article in which the claim is that "in school and at home, youths often engage with an array of pop culture texts for pleasure or to gain

information that addresses issues important to them."Students will often use this knowledge-base to make sense of their world including their engagement with academic work.

Hellenga (1982) acknowledges this idea. But in doing so, he thinks that we still fail to capture the essence of a reading experience. This is regardless of attempts to define the concept. These definitions include

> Interpreting texts, the making and revising of assumptions, the rendering and regretting of judgments, the coming to and abandoning of conclusions, the giving and withdrawing of approval, the specifying of causes, the asking of questions, the supplying of answers, the solving of puzzles.
>
> (1982: 105)

The concept can also be defined "in terms of psychological processes such as unconscious fantasies, defense mechanisms, projection, introjection, identification, and so forth" (Hellenga, 1982: 105).

Hence, without disputing these integral paradigms of explaining the reading experience, Hellenga (1982) believes that we should be aware that a literary reading practice is rather subjective. This is because neither of these theoretical lenses place major emphasis on the emotions a reader feels when enthralled by a text. The reading experience is therefore an experience that can be argued to be based on enjoyment for a number of reasons by the reader.

Expanding on this idea but adopting the "reading as a social practice" perspective, Kirkland (2011: 199) explains "literacy engagement as an ideological artefact, one that exposes a hidden literate process related to an individual's understanding of her- or himself in relation to the socio-political subtext of the literate act." The ideological that Kirkland (2011: 200) writes about is "the ideological self, (a concept developed by Bakhtin), [that] is constructed in relation to an individual's present interests and past experiences – the totality of the surrounding ideological spaces that comprise an individual's pool of interests." These interests arise from within, i.e. the heart and mind, and are dictated to by our surroundings. Hence the dispositions that are relevant in having a literary reading practice pertain to having the will to read, i.e. being inquisitive, but also reading for enjoyment. These attributes according to Kirkland (2011) are foundational. The more analytical skills are merely basic and serve as an intermediary to becoming a reader.

Brandt and Clinton (cited in Reder and Divila,2005) accentuate another aspect that is repeatedly discussed by literary and literacy theorists about viewing "reading as a social and cultural practice."They rhetorically ask: "can we not see the ways that literacy arises out of local, particular, situated human interactions while also seeing how it also regularly arrives from other places – infiltrating, disjointing, and displacing local life" (p. 173)? These questions ring true as literary works illustrate to its readers how interconnected our lives have become – especially the category relevant to this study, crime fiction. Criminal activities are not confined to Cape Town or Johannesburg – they also cross borders expanding to Botswana, Nigeria, the UK and the USA. Furthermore, these crimes cross racial, gender and class boundaries, thus meaning that everyone is affected by these activities.

For Phelps (2010), the problem is not with the notion of reading being a "social and cultural practice", as he is a proponent of this belief too. He, however, calls to attention the manner in which popular culture texts portray society and social groups, for he regards these texts as controversial. He states that "popular culture has given superficial portraits at best and downright harmful depictions at worst" of social groups (p. 192). He has a firm belief in these modern texts misleading students, as popular culture texts develop and further perpetuate stereotypes that have dire consequences. What Phelps (2010) brings to the fore is to engage students with literature that is multicultural which is a literature of alternative voices. These voices are those of feminists, minority groups and different ethnic groups which cover a broad spectrum of issues that are prominent in post-modern texts. This is not to say that these texts are not or cannot be popular. In crime fiction for instance, Thompson (1993) informs us that novels with strong female characters, i.e. stories that speak to and about women's issues, gained a lot of interest from the 1980s onwards. It is also learnt from Bell (2003) that even the world-renowned novelist Charles Dickens was viewed as a writer whose works, such as *Great Expectations* or *Oliver Twist*, were delineated as works of Newgate or sensation stories, thus making them popular too. Therefore, multicultural literature should not be perceived as the antithesis of popular fiction or perhaps the ideal symbolism for literary fiction as both categories can have works that Phelps (2010) referred to as multicultural literature.

Adding to these ideas about multicultural literature, Johnson-Higgins (2002) describes multicultural literature as texts that seek to give a positive outlook on under-represented social groups. She says though that "in its most authentic form it is an area of literature that

focuses on the reality of various cultures."[8] Clem (2005) elaborates on this description of the term in his proposal for a multicultural literature course. He states that multicultural literature deals with "explorations of race, class, gender, nation, region, sexuality, ability, age, and the environment along with understandings of history, formal dynamics of texts, and of the personal as political" from different "global contexts" (p. 125). Thus, Nieto (cited in Johnson-Higgins, 2002) says that multicultural literature is "a more balanced, complete, accurate, and realistic literature that asks even young readers to grapple with sometimes wrenching issues."[9]

Clem (2005) further states that reading multicultural literature will allow students to be critical thinkers, as social conventions will be challenged and stereotypes will be put to the test. In highlighting the benefits of engaging with multicultural literature, Clem (2005: 124) reflects on his personal experience of being introduced to multicultural literature because, it was then that he acquired the ability "to read critically, to understand and value a range of aesthetics, to see the connections between oppression and institutional power, to understand (his) pain and that of the other."

Taking into account what is proposed by Phelps (2010), Clem (2005) and Johnson-Higgins (2002), the argument may be that the texts selected for this research study force a reader to consider social issues (such as stereotyping of race and gender, misogyny and violence) within a South African context. These novels can be viewed as multicultural literature that has been generally delineated as popular fiction. More on the genre's popular fiction status is elaborated on in the following subsection.

Worth noting is the identities of the authors who wrote these novels as in some literary circles there are some academics who speak of the authenticity of a literary work based on whether the author stems from a particular cultural/traditional/race group (Johnson-Higgins, 2002). Johnson-Higgins (2002) further writes that there are exceptions to this notion. According to her "these exceptions include authors who have lived within the culture they are writing

[8]Accessed online fromhttp://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/strategies/topics/literacy/articles/multicultural_childrens_literature_/, 28.09.2013

[9]Accessed online from: http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/strategies/topics/literacy/articles/multicultural_childrens_literature_/, 28.09.2013

about all or most of their lives regardless of their race."[10]It is also important for that literary work to be accepted by members of that group as an accurate depiction of that society's realities. For this research study, the authors fall under the latter perspective simply because the books are about crime in South Africa and how South Africans are dealing with the issue of crime in the midst of so many other social issues that have emanated prior to and since the period of democracy. Crime affects all South Africans and these authors are part of that society. The challenge for these texts would be whether they assimilate minority groups into mainstream cultures.

Yoon, Simpson and Haag (2010) state that within education there has been an approach to familiarise students with multicultural literature. However, they do not think that this manner of engaging students has brought about the outcomes anticipated by Clem (2005) of challenging the social order. Their concern with this approach is that books that advocate for multicultural literature do not achieve what is hoped for. What happens instead is that under-represented groups within society are written about in a manner as to suggest that they be assimilated into mainstream cultures. This defeats the purpose, resulting in majority or powerful groups being viewed as superior. According to Yoon, et.al (2010) there are two approaches to teaching multicultural literature. Although their study was conducted in the USA, the principles adopted are applicable in South Africa. The first of the approaches that they write about pertains to incorporating minority groups into mainstream society and according to Jenks, Lee and Kanpol (cited in Yoon, et.al, 2010: 110) the first approach is summarised by the following questions: "How do we Americanize minorities…? How do we prepare them for a competitive economy?"

Yoon, et.al (2010: 110) inform us though that "this assimilation approach recognizes equity, it can only be achieved when the minorities acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for participating in a mainstream, market-driven society." Contrary to this approach is an ideal that advocates for "cultural pluralism." Within this approach, Yoon, et.al (2010) believe that the education principles are geared to both sets of students, the mainstream group as well as the minority groups. Hence, institutions of teaching and learning need to concern themselves more with matters relating to equality while acknowledging the differences among students.

[10]Accessed online from: *http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/strategies/topics/literacy/articles/multicultural_childrens_literature_/, 28.09.2013*

Though certain aspects of the second approach are in line with the first approach, the fundamental difference is that the second approach's primary objective is to "challenge dominant ideology and hegemony" with the intention to bring about equality for all (p. 111).

2.1.3 Grappling with the Popular versus the Literary

In the discussion about popular versus literary in relation to the literariness of crime fiction, a number of writers acknowledge that the genre is considered to be a form of popular fiction. Popular fiction, when compared to literary fiction, seeks to entertain its readers, and critics dismiss the genre as a form of "formulaic escapism" (Maxwell, accessed online 2013).[11] Contrary to this idea of popular fiction, "in literary fiction, the author is judged by critics on his or her grasp of the scope and nuance of the English language, and on the lack of predictability of the narrative itself." In addition, the genre is also claimed to be "difficult and inaccessible" (Maxwell, accessed online 2013). This is not an opinion that can easily be discarded, for in Eagleton's acknowledgement of the term literary being problematic, he states that "literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language, deviates systematically from everyday speech" (1996: 2). In this highly abstract way of using language, Eagleton (1996: 2) says that "there is a disproportion between the signifiers and the signifieds" thus explaining that "we" make meaning from symbols (words, gestures, drawings). Depending on how abstract the symbol is, the more or less sophisticated the interpretation will be.

These opinions may explain why some may place the genre under popular fiction, which is viewed in the same light as popular culture. Popular culture is based on consumeristic values, i.e. the type of stories are generally sensationalist, and the claim is that these texts are geared toward mass production (Arnold, 2003). The consumeristic value is that these texts (and in this instance crime novels) merely serve its readership as a form of entertainment – engrossing them in a quick and easy read. This leads to readers looking for more material to engage with and authors oblige by producing novels more frequently, such as Stephen King and James Patterson. More specifically to South Africa it is hard to pinpoint exactly the crowds that are drawn by crime fiction, but basing it on Naidu's (2013) concession that more and more students are taking up the topic in their research papers, this can be assumed to be one of the groups that are taken by the genre. But it is also necessary to include those who are categorised as middle-class South Africans. These are not arguably a mass market, but what can be extrapolated from this –as well as the idea that there is an increasing interest to

[11] Accessed online from: http://www.elizabethlowell.com/popfiction.html, 24.08.2013

find crime novels produced in indigenous languages, as told by Naidu (2013)is that the group is most certainly diverse and on the increase. But as Higginson (2005: 162) says, crime fiction "markets itself to a 'low' or 'middle-brow' readership."Joyce (1995: 310) states that "the popular can be thought as a space of cultural resistance."In other words, it is the platform for alternative voices. Its ideologies challenge those of the hegemonist groups, however, it does so by focusing on "consumption." It is in this form of literature that feminist voices are heard, race issues are raised and religious ideologies are juxtaposed, hence resisting the long-standing culture of so-called white male and Christian superiority.

The debate over the genre's popular or literary status in South Africa is also prevalent, for Naidu (2013: 126) mentions that there are debates of "South African crime fiction to be considered as bona fide South African literature, some even claiming for it the status of the new 'political novel' in post-apartheid South Africa." But in those who begrudgingly accept the genre's literariness, Naidu says that

> Detractors see crime fiction as straddling the imperatives of artistic merit and commercial success, and their trenchant question is: how can a literary category which relies on voyeurism, graphic violence and hyperbole be afforded the status of an academic object of enquiry alongside 'great' literature, or a sociological tool in a context in which crime is a scourge?
>
> (2013: 126)

For a response to that question it may be worthwhile to turn to Warnes (2012: 983) who emphasises that "the problem facing critics who feel that popular literature lacks value is that their criticism puts them at odds with the large readerships of such literature." Authors have written about social issues responsibly and their books have remained popular. So, even though authors of popular fiction, including crime fiction, can and do reflect the miserable state of society, they do so with a measure of optimism for there is an individual who seeks to do good where there is doom and gloom (Maxwell, accessed online 2013).

Eagleton (1996) elaborates on the issue of value (or lack thereof) when he raises a profound point that what may be valued by one person may be of less value to another or have no value at all when it comes to literature. Ellis (cited in Eagleton: 8) compares literature to weeds and emphasising on the point just mentioned, he says that

> Weeds are not particular kinds of plant, but just any kind of plant which for some reason or another a gardener does not want around…perhaps literature means something like the opposite: any kind of writing which for some reason or another somebody values highly.

(1996: 8).

This facet of Eagleton and Ellis's (1996) idea of what literature probably is works in favour of crime fiction for it makes an appeal to view what is literature in a practical manner with less emphasis on the theoretical aspects thereof. Eagleton explains this by stating that

> Literature and weed are functional rather than ontological terms: they tell us about what we do, not about the fixed being of things…they tell us about the role of a text or a thistle in a social context, its relations with and differences from its surroundings, the ways it behaves, the purposes it may be put to and the human practices clustered around it.
>
> (1996: 8).

At the same time, Eagleton (1996) also claims that this definition should not be readily embraced as it fails to touch on the essence of literature. According to him this view about literature creates more confusion because "it is far from clear that we can discriminate neatly between practical and non-practical ways of relating ourselves to language" (p. 8). Eagleton (1996: 8) highlights this uncertainty by stating first that "reading a novel for pleasure obviously differs from reading a road sign for information." But he asks thereafter "how about reading a biology textbook to improve your mind – is that a pragmatic treatment of language or not" (p. 8).

Eagleton's (1996) argument implies that reading a "biology textbook" is to gain insights and to acquire knowledge on science-related matters. Conversely, reading a novel, or a crime novel in this case, merely suggests enjoyment. I argue that the crime novel reading experience, though pleasurable, also serves its purposes in the reader developing an interest in an array of topics. Its capability, as discussed in Chapter Three, to intrigue and captivate a reader, through genre conventions such as suspense, mystery and thrill introduces a reader to a variety of topics or ideas that are not necessarily discussed at length. But I do concede that this occurs at a broad level and is not as advanced as a textbook, for example, of a particular science. As far as I am concerned, however, the reading of both a crime novel and biology textbook is a pragmatic approach to language. The practicality lies in the reasons for which the reader wishes to engage with either. There are certain discourses in line with either, and prior to the reader's engagement with the texts, the reader should know the nuances at play.

CHAPTER 3: APPLYING CONVENTIONS OF THE GENRE TO SOUTH AFRICAN CRIME NOVELS

3.1 Defining the Genre

This chapter highlights the various features of crime fiction and the subgenres that fall under this form of literature. In discussing the conventions of the genre, two South African crime novels are referred to later in this chapter, namely, Deon Meyer's *Blood Safari* and Roger Smith's *Mixed Blood*. The attempt is to view these novels through the lenses of the genre to see how a few authors' novels in South Africa differ or adhere to the norms and standards of crime fiction. This is not an extensive analysis of the novels as this section of the research study merely seeks to underscore and comprehend the fundamental notions of the genre. Also, these novels are in the English language or have been translated from other languages into English. What is being discussed throughout this chapter is equally applicable to novels that are not written in English.

To recap, the overall objective of this study is to determine why students are drawn to the genre. Therefore, my thinking is that it would be beneficial to understand various dimensions that are at play when reading crime fiction novels. The literature surveyed for this section will illustrate this by in-depth analysis of a number of subgenres.

It is probably prudent to state from the onset that the term crime fiction, "throughout this study, is used to denote all the genres and subgenres that concern themselves with violation of the law, whether or not this violation actually took place, and whether or not this violation is sanctioned by the novelist" (Thompson, 1993: 3).

In addition, it should be noted that this study is not claiming that the subgenres are identical (i.e. these stories have the exact same elements, features and characteristics) for there are obvious differences. As Thompson (1993: 3-4) states "it is possible, sometimes even desirable, to categorise genres according to dominant conventions."

But he says that "in practice, however, many of these single-convention categorizations are called into question by the presence of other conventions, which should not," as it were, "be there, and which then have to be rationalised away" (p. 3-4).

In light of this, it is appropriate to turn to the two main devices that provide a framework used by writers in their creation of crime novels and that the readers rely on in their engagement

with novels typical of this genre. Malmgren (2001) describes crime fiction as a work of art made out of formulaic elements and mimetic elements. Formulaic elements are there to represent continuity and familiarity to the reader, for much of the aesthetics of crime fiction is repetitive and reoccurring. In reading novels of this genre one finds similarities in the style, characters, plot, settings and crimes, with subtle differences within the various subgenres.

In relation to mimetic elements, Malmgren (2001) uses this descriptive aspect to highlight the manner in which crime fiction is inclined to be realistic. Hence, mimetic elements within the genre are techniques employed to evoke a sense of realism for authors attempting to depict society as it is. Warnes (2012) gives a sense of what the genre is striving to achieve when using mimetic elements. He states that "part of the work that crime fiction does, means building bridges between physical and affective worlds, identifying and naming danger, managing the sources of fear, deciphering the hidden codes that govern the possibility of violence and death" (p. 985).

What is to be extrapolated from the distinction between formulaic elements and mimetic elements is that the former is a pronouncement of the genre's standard formula, which entails the pattern that crime novels follow. A crime is committed, a heroic person who is referred to as the investigator seeks to resolve the problem by putting pieces of evidence together, and finally, there usually is a solution (Higginson, 2005). Mimetic elements mirror the societies that we live in by depicting real-life situations. Examples of these are policing institutions that are bureaucratic and/or corrupt in nature, that there is violence and in the midst of this, there are the vulnerable or law-abiding people who are concerned or oblivious about their surroundings.

Cawelti (cited in Malmgren, 2001: 117) distinguishes between the two by explaining that "the mimetic element in literature confronts us with the world as we know it, while the formulaic element reflects the construction of an ideal world without the disorder, the ambiguity, the uncertainty, and the limitations of the world of our experience."

Much of the classification of crime fiction's subgenres depends on various periods in history in which societies became better equipped in their handling of crime and their appeal for restoration of order. However, what will be noted is that restoration was not necessarily the theme in this literature centuries ago. Bell discusses the differences of crime writing over time in his recount of the history of the genre. He states that "the literature of the eighteenth

century is suffused with crime, but handles it in a wholly different way from that of the nineteenth and twentieth" (p. 7). In explaining this distinction he says,

> In the eighteenth century, then, crime writing is not confined to a single generic or conventional form, designed for a particular audience…and, though often comic, it is not reassuring in intent but intrinsically contentious, willing to confront and disquiet rather than to comfort like the predominantly recreational detective fiction of later centuries.
>
> (2003: 8)

The "recreational detective" that Bell talks about is readily embraced by nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first century societies because he/she serves as a "custodian [of truth], guaranteeing safe passage and neutralising the threat of even the most cunning criminals" as he/she mediates "modern systems of scientific and rational enquiry to order an uncertain and troubling world" that readers are struggling to grapple with (Knight, cited in Bell, 2003: 8).

But how societies evolved in their handling of crime is not the only contributing aspect to how crime fiction subgenres are being classified. Another important aspect that has shaped the categorisation of various subgenres has been socio-political because scholars have looked at which groups (gender, race and class) dominated or presented an alternative voice at which particular juncture of history. In highlighting the role of women, both as characters and authors within the genre of crime fiction, Reddy (2003) brings to our attention how the heritage of the crime novel was considered to be passed on from one male to the next. Little (or no) acknowledgement was given to women. But in validating that women have also played an instrumental role in the history of crime fiction, Reddy (2003) makes reference to a novel that was published in 1796 called *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe. As a result of this novel, Reddy (2003: 191) feels that "it [should now be] widely acknowledged that the woman writer and the woman detective have as long a history in crime fiction as do their male counterparts." How the role of women became realised over the ages, and the influences thereof, will be elaborated on in the subsection on the modern detective novel in which elements of this phenomenon resonate.

3.2 Subgenres Within Crime Fiction

3.2.1 The Newgate Novel versus the Sensation Novel

Pickett (2003) marks the first exceptional instance of the role of women in the genre when she writes about the differences between the Newgate novel and the sensation novel that she believes represented male perspectives and female perspectives –respectively – regarding crime fiction. Since these subgenres spanned a short period (roughly 1820 to 1870), Pickett (2003: 19) states that "these novels and the controversies they engendered tell us a great deal about cultural anxieties and social and literary change at two key points in the Victorian period." These subgenres managed to do so in an "entertaining" and "absorbing" way. The Newgate novels, written by authors such as Edward Bulwer (*Paul Clifford* in 1830), Charles Dickens (*Oliver Twist* in 1837) and Charles Whitehead (*Lives of the Highwaymen* in 1834), however, though popular, were focused on the legal and judicial system of the 18th century. She describes this subgenre as "crime novels, and, in some cases historical novels, which chronicled the adventures and escapes of independent, courageous criminals, often legendary eighteenth-century robbers and highwaymen" (p. 19).

She adds that "their settings ranged from castles to 'flash kens' (drinking dens frequented by thieves and other habitues of the criminal underworld), and they often mingled lower- and upper-class characters" (p. 19).

These novels sparked debates and a lot of controversy because of the fashion in which they depicted infamous criminals by

> (romanticising) and (glamorising) crime and low life, and inviting sympathy with criminals rather than with the victims of crime by making their criminal subjects the hunted object of a chase, by focusing on their motivation or psychology, and by representing them as the victims of circumstance or society.
>
> (2003: 20)

But they are still viewed as literary works that "exerted considerable influence on the representation of crime in the nineteenth-century novel in general, and on the development of such later genres or sub-genres as the sensation novel and the detective novel" (p. 19).

In describing the sensation subgenre, Pickett (2003: 33) writes about the sensation novel as a work of fiction that entailed some aspects of the Newgate novel for these books dealt with

"nervous, psychological, sexual and social shocks, and had complicated plots involving bigamy, adultery, seduction, fraud, forgery, blackmail, kidnapping and, sometimes, murder" which all have origins from "journalistic accounts". But there were obvious differences between the Newgate novel and the sensation novel. Though Wilkie Collins is labelled as one of the first authors of the sensation novel, the genre was generally characterised by female authors (such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Rhoda Broughton) who were very successful in writing bestsellers. These authors also had female sleuths or female perpetrators in their novels. Furthermore, these books concerned themselves with the contemporary livelihood of middle-class and upper-class people. In drawing further differences between the two subgenres, Pickett (2003: 34) says that "in the sensation novel the scene of the crime was more likely to be the home than the road, the drawing room rather than the drinking den."Furthermore, according to her,

> the sensation novel did not depict the criminal underworld [as the Newgate novel did], but rather it explored the dark underside of respectable society: the family is the locus of crime, and the secrets of the family are responsible for most of the plot complications, and in most cases crime and punishment circulates entirely within the family.
>
> (2003: 34)

Pickett (2003) denotes too that the sensation novel changed how crime was viewed within society. No longer was crime viewed as "a world of its own" that contrasted with the "respectable world". Instead, what happened is that criminal activity was then considered to be part and parcel of everyone's world. As Pickett (2003: 34) suspects, this was as a result of "changes in policing such as the formation of the new Detective Police in 1842, and the development, in the wake of the new divorce laws", in Britain, that are believed to have generated the employment of spies that unravelled family secrets for spouses wanting to spy on each other.

As mentioned earlier, the Newgate novel gave birth to other subgenres such as the sensation novel and the detective novel. Kaymen, on the latter, links the detective novel to the short story and he feels that both are closely associated with the "history of the magazine". However, what he also mentions is that

> while the form initiated by Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) and Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840) flourished in America, the short

> story failed to make as great an impression in Britain until the end of the century, [as it was] held back by the success of the three-decker or serialised novel.
>
> (2003: 41)

One of the detective novel's distinguishing characteristics was its setting, and Kaymen (2003) explains that as a result of an increase and improvement of infrastructure, urbanisation became part of the theme in these stories. In drawing differences between detective novels that were from Britain and those that were from the USA, Kaymen (2003: 43) says that "those, most frequently American, set in the world of industry and finance, and there are those which dwell on the family and the home."

Meanwhile, "with British stories in particular, the public dimension is often provided by the trace of Empire – the precious stone brought back from India, the missing brother or wife who returns from Australia, or the crime committed in the past in America" (Kaymen, 2003: 43).

One of the authors, apart from the ones already mentioned, who was regarded to be successful is Conan Doyle for his "detective fiction appealed not only to a wider readership – the urban masses that traveled to and from work in commuter trains – but also to an increased public interest in sensational crime" (Thompson, 1993: 63).

How Conan Doyle managed to do this with his character Sherlock Holmes was to place emphasis on the prevailing style of that era, which was to modernise or professionalise Holmes. But what set Conan Doyle's character apart from the others was that he used techniques from the sensation novel for his stories, which Kayman (2003) thinks served as a comfort to his readers. But also, what Kayman (2003: 48) reckons Conan Doyle managed to do is that he "expertly achieved the right balance of elements to provide the male middle-classes with relaxing reading which flattered them by providing an intellectual adventure, while assuaging their anxieties about the modern world."

Furthermore, these stories honed in on everyday issues which it used in telling stories that were relatable to just about any person that lived during that time. Hence, much of what was achieved in this era was taken up by different subgenres that followed.

3.2.2 The Golden Age

Following the era of the Newgate novel and the sensation novel was the Golden Age, a period that has come to be accepted to have thrived between the two world wars. It was dominated by authors such as Dorothy L Sayers, AB Cox, Agatha Christie and SS Van Dine. What is notable from stories told in the Golden Age (or the clue-puzzle novel as it was referred to) is that certain traits from previous subgenres became permanent, such as the use of several suspects while murder became a central feature. The detection of criminal acts was no longer done by an individual that relied solely on intuition. Instead, the reader was exposed to the rational thinking patterns of the detective. According to Knight (2003: 74) this is "a method which fits with the unemotional presentation of the crime." In substantiating the methodology in which the detective solves the crimes in a typical British novel by an author such as Christie, Knight (2003: 74) says that "the rational and at most semi-official detection will focus strongly on circumstantial evidence and will eventually ratify it, properly interpreted, as a means of identifying the criminal."

He also says that, in these stories, "sometimes there will be a gesture towards 'psychology'" (p. 43) which focused on the human aspect and not the deaths.

Also worth knowing is that the detection was done by either a high-ranking police officer or an amateur sleuth. In the event, the amateur detective was the investigator, he or she (though men were generally the investigators) would have a strong connection to the legal fraternity by virtue of a family member who holds a powerful position. This gave the detective more credibility and leeway in the course of the investigation.

Another typical feature of the clue-puzzle is its enclosed environment, i.e. the urban setting would consist of a few streets, an apartment (if it was an American novel) or a rural house (if the setting was in England). However, not only are these stories confined to secluded environments, for Knight (2003: 78) adds that

> the story is also socially enclosed: lower classes, especially professional criminals, play very minor roles…the criminal comes from among the social circle of the victim, and servants are very rarely guilty – and if so will usually be in some form of social disguise.
>
> (2003: 78)

To emphasise how confined these stories were, Knight (2003) mentions too that authors such as Christie and Van Dine did not focus on broader political issues. The popular smart villains

found in crime novels almost a century ago (and that are characteristic of contemporary thrillers), failed to make an appearance in the novels that were typically from this era. An explanation of why these novels are so detached from the greater contexts is provided by Malmgren (2001) who looks at Caweleti for the reason. Caweleti (cited in Malmgren, 2001: 121) states that "the fact that this setting is isolated, cut off from change and history, ensures that there will be few disruptions in the signifying chains; the setting abstracts the story from the complexity and confusion of the larger social world."

In summarising what the clue-puzzle novel entails, Andersson and Cloete (2006) draw a distinction between classical detective fiction (a term stemming from Raymond Chandler's critique of the subgenre) and the modern detective fiction novel. By referring to James, Andersson and Cloete (2006: 124) state that with the former

> There will be a violent death; a limited circle of suspects all with motives, means and opportunity; false clues; and a tenable ending with a solution to the mystery which both author and reader hope will be a satisfying consummation of suspense and excitement but which the reader could himself arrive at by a process of logical deduction from revealed facts with the aid of no more luck or intuition than it is reasonable to permit to the detective himself.
>
> (2006: 124)

While, with the latter (the modern detective story), it is learnt from Andersson and Cloete (2006) that it has been further divided into other subgenres such as the private eye (or hard-boiled detective novel), police-procedural and thrillers.

3.2.3. The Hard-Boiled Detective Genre

Elaborating on what Andersson and Cloete say about the modern detective novel (or the hard-boiled detective genre), Warnes (2012: 982) adds that these differentiations in crime fiction are attributed to "structuralist analyses by Todorov [who] initiated serious literary critical study of the field." He says that Todorov differentiated "between the 'whodunit'(in which past events are unravelled in a static present [where the reader is revealed facets of the case at the same time as the lead character through deductive probing], and the 'thriller' (in which the action is located primarily in the present [and has a high level of action]." It was then that other scholars labelled other subgenres as "noir" and "anti-conspiracy" thrillers, the

"detective thriller" (a hybrid of the whodunit and the thriller), court-room drama, and psycho-thriller" (p. 982).

What is notable, according to Andersson and Cloete, in these stories is that there is

> a change in emphasis – usually on characters, psychological details and social context – rather than a change in formula…[and], obviously language is used differently in the sense that it is more contemporary and streetwise and the pace heats up in many of the modern novels to create suspense.
>
> (2006: 125)

If anything, the hard-boiled detective novel, which emanates from the United States of America, has proven that it "came into existence as an oppositional discourse, a form which finds its identity by breaking with the conventions of the dominant discourse (mystery fiction)" (Malmgren, 2006: 124).

According to Malmgren (2006: 124) the genre "does so by presenting readers with the 'real' world, a decentered world, defined in terms of its difference from the world of mystery fiction."

Furthermore, "in the "real world" of Hammett's fiction [an American author], gangsters wield political power, people are not what they pretend to be, justice is frequently not served, and ordinary citizens keep silent from fear of being permanently silenced" (p. 123).

Porter (2003) explains though that at the time in which the private eye story was being written, a number of changes had already taken place in the USA on a socio-economic as well as cultural level. These changes undoubtedly influenced the style in which the modern detective subgenre was being shaped into. As he says,

> on the level of history, it was the decades following the civil war or the so-called Gilded Age that laid the foundations of the modern American industrial capitalist system which was more or less fully formed by the 1920s…the economic take-off associated with the first industrial revolution of iron, steel, steam power, a nation-wide network of railroads, and rapid urbanisation had by then metamorphosed into the age of electricity, the wireless, the telephone, the automobile, the skyscraper and, of course, the moving pictures.
>
> (2003: 95)

What became the signature trait for this subgenre was the manner in which language was being used, for it was a language that ordinary people usually conversed or communicated in (Porter, 2003). Walton and Jones (1999: 121) go on to say that, "hard-boiled writing was an American revolution in crime fiction, and this was specifically a stylistic revolution in that it validated the vernacular of the urban United States as its legitimate linguistic territory."

This is a subgenre that traditionally was written by men with heroic male characters, and which Walton and Jones (1999) believe counted for the 'tough talk' demeanour that many of the detectives tend to illustrate. Gibson (cited in Walton and Jones, 1999: 122) stipulates that the typical dialogue patterns of the subgenre are "short sentences, crude repetitions of words, simple grammatical structures with little subordinating."

However, though much of the language is crude and laden with political incorrectness, Walton and Jones (1999: 129) acknowledge Christianson's view on the use of wisecracks in this genre in that, "the acting out represented by the wisecrack offers a vicarious thrill for the reader: Against the good taste and breeding of hegemonic, dominant culture, the hard-boiled private eye is scandalous, indecorous, vulgar, offensive – and violent."

They conclude by saying that "this has become the way in which the 'wisecrack' is defined against acceptable codes of literary and social decorum" (p. 129).

The language aspect as well as the tough guy persona is challenged within the female hard-boiled detective genre. This will be explored in the following subsection because initially these aspects were used to discriminate against women by placing them in inferior social roles. But in redressing the aspects that cast females in a negative light, certain features of the subgenre are now being viewed differently.

3.2.3.1 The Role of Women in the Hard-Boiled Detective Novel

It was through language that women were initially denied access into hard-boiled stories. Walton and Jones suggest that there was a "conspiracy" to keep the voice of American fiction "aggressively male." As far as they are concerned,

> at least until Erica Jong there has been no vernacular for women outside quotation marks. Bad grammar, slang, and even a strong regional accent, like cussing, blaspheming, hard drinking, and tomcatting, were the prerogatives of men and boys,

> defensive reactions against the encroachments of civilizing womankind and the tyranny of hearth and home."
>
> (1999: 122)

For Walton and Jones (1999), this linguistic double standard was perpetuated so that if women attempted to use such linguistic features, they would be viewed with contempt and utmost disapproval. Expanding on the manner in which women were poorly depicted within the hard-boiled subgenre, Reddy (2003: 193), speaks about how the hard-boiled novel in its early decades "(represented) an intensification of the crime novel's commitment to a particular variety of realism that depends heavily on a tough, uncompromising surface verisimilitude."

This is how women effectively were being excluded from the subgenre. At best, they were merely seen as amateur sleuths. Other roles that female characters were designated were of the kind that perpetuated misconceptions, such as women being "dangerous, seductive villains or nurturing but essentially insignificant helpmates" (Reddy, 2003: 193). Hence, Klein (cited in Munt, 1994) appeals for female authors that would seize the moment by writing authentic and realistic stories about women based on their lived experiences. These stories should differ considerably from the "shallow, excessively feminine stereotypes by many male authors" and should not fall into the rigid make-up of the male hard-boiled detective novel (p. 191).

Fortunately, women have been reappropriating the subgenre and in so doing, female hard-boiled novels have been able to "[develop]an intimate bond of identification between the narrator and a differently constituted readership" (Walton and Jones, 1999: 127-128). When this is achieved, "it throws the techniques of male hard-boiled fiction into (often comic) relief" (Walton and Jones, 1999: 127-128).

Since violence is a re-occurring theme in hard-boiled fiction, this is an aspect worth mentioning as women writers have reconstructed this convention. As Reddy notes, where the male detective has been

> repeatedly proving his heroism (and masculinity) by physically destroying others, with that destruction lovingly detailed so that readers participate vicariously in his triumph, the female detective in turn acts violently when necessary – usually in self-

> defence or in the defence of another – and [she] understands that violence [has] a lasting impact on her.
>
> (2003: 198-199)

As a result, the female detective neither "triumphs" when she has defeated "an adversary" nor does she leave a multitude of bodies in the wake of her battles, as Reddy (2003) claims. In implicitly stating that these are traits of the male hard-boiled novel, it should be said that such a blanket statement, though not outwardly expressed, is uncalled for because, when reading the Elvis Cole series by Robert Crais, one will come across several scenes in which the detective, Cole, is affected by a murder that he witnessed or that he committed. Crais will often write about Cole having sleepless nights or washing himself over and over again to get rid of the traces of death. But in accepting that this is probably one of a few exceptions, because in the South African novels selected for this discussion, there are scenes in which the male protagonist is detached from the act of violence.

According to Reddy (2003) one of the first novelists to write a book that had great potential in constructing how female hard-boiled detectives ought to be perceived is P. D. James who, with tongue and cheek, called the novel of a very young female sleuth *An Unsuitable Job for a Female* (published in 1972). Though Reddy (2003) believes and claims that critics thought that the novel was an ideal platform for a series, James did not publish a follow-up until 1982 – ten years after the first book. The first novel paved the way for the protagonist to become a detective of note through trial and error. But the second and final novel was apparently disappointing because James stripped the character of her heroic status as a detective. James portrayed her as a person that was incompetent and that made mistakes.

At the same time, when the female hard-boiled detective genre was doing remarkably well in terms of sales, Reddy (2003) notes Cornwell's main protagonist – Kay Scarpetta – was a character that attracted large numbers of readers because of the first novel of the medical pathologist's series, *Postmortem*, published in 1990. What is significant about this series is that Cornwell's character performs thorough post-mortems on bodies, there is "FBI involvement in tracking serial killers, endangerment of the detective, and her ultimate triumph over the forces of evil" (p. 205).

In terms of racial consciousness, Reddy (2003) alerts us to the inroads made by black female authors in the subgenre of the hard-boiled detective novel. In her acknowledgement of how black female authors have contributed in reconstructing the subgenre, Reddy states that

> much as the white feminist writers who created detective series in the 1980s significantly altered the genre by incorporating feminist themes, questioning the conventional plot's restoration of order, and centralising a female consciousness, women of colour had a transformative impact on the genre in the 1990s.
>
> (2003: 202)

She explains the contributions made by black female authors by stating that they "challenge the definitions of order and justice on which crime fiction has traditionally operated" (p. 202). They further advance their cause by writing about race and class, including gender issues, but with the emphasis of race being a "fact of life" thus making its ideology a fundamental feature in their novels.

Walton and Jones correctly state that though the mass readership of these novels are women, it must be understood that these books attracted them

> not because they domesticated crime fiction…rather, they professionalized it, as the hard-boiled novels of the 1930s and 1940s had done [because] they put an independent working woman detective at the center of the narrative of investigation, and the first-person or focalized narration of the traditional hard-boiled form, along with its distinctive stylistic qualities, provided a unique avenue for exploring the difference of women's experiences, from their own point of view and in a positioned, personalized voice.
>
> (1999: 30)

In elaborating on the first-person narration aspect, Walton and Jones (1999) draw our attention to this important facet of the hard-boiled detective novel that essentially has assisted in how women are being viewed within the subgenre. They talk about how the first-person narration has positioned the reader in viewing the world of the novel from the detective's perspective and although it tends to be retrospective, the story manages to maintain a level of chronology while the reader gathers bits of information during the course of reading. In essence, what Walton and Jones are stating is that

> the hard-boiled novel tells the life story of the fictional professional detective, or "private eye," in the subjective voice of the private "I," and its autobiographical form offers a unique space for developing questions of character, conduct, and

> perspective as they relate to the rules of gender and genre, making it possible to revise the identity of the PI.
>
> (1999: 151)

When this idea is applied to the subgenre for the female detective, old conventions become disrupted. A woman no longer is seen as an object to be belittled or sexually eroticised. What happens is that a female detective is viewed as a rational being who handles investigations in a mature and professional way.

3.2.4 The Police-Procedural Novel

In another subgenre, the police-procedural novel, the role of women has also been noted. What is worth mentioning is that women have been writing such stories since the 1960s, which is years before their rewriting of the hard-boiled subgenre. As Walton and Jones (1999) proclaim, it was a matter of time before crime fiction had to reflect this change in society for that was the period when women were starting to occupy positions in previously male-dominated professions such as the police, the military and firefighting. Hence, much of what the female novel of this subgenre aimed to achieve is encapsulated by one of the early authors, O'Donnell, who Walton and Jones quote as follows:

> I wasn't interested then in making Norah a spokeswoman for women's lib, nor am I now. However, I did want her to be part of the real world, and the facts of the case are that at the time Norah joined the force, 'police officers, and female' were just breaking out of the traditional mould of matron and juvenile work. The evolution of women's responsibilities within the New York Police Department is perforce a part of Norah's story.
>
> (1999: 15)

Panek (2003: 154) observes, and rightfully so, that "in the world of crime fiction cops have always been with us." This has been the case as early as the days of Poe's *Prefect to the Golden Age* when there were Inspectors Alleyn, Appleby, Grant, and Parker. Panek (2003: 154) with a measure of irony adds that "even Dashiell Hammett portrayed police officers in a sympathetic light in his early stories, but nobody claims that the presence of a police officer makes police fiction."

In describing elements of the subgenre, Walton and Jones (1999: 13) state that the police-procedural novel is "a version of the crime novel in which the mystery is unraveled by the

police and in which much of the reader's pleasure is derived from the novel's focus on police teamwork, techniques of investigation, and routines of crime solving."

In addition, they state that

> in these books the central character is traditionally viewed as part of a collectivity, integrated into the state structures of law and order that function as the corporate hero of the novels, thereby inspiring reader confidence in the ability of such structures to administer justice and control social disorder.
>
> (1999: 13)

However, Panek (2003: 155) finds a discrepancy in describing the police-procedural novel as "a standard mystery novel in which police work influenced the ways in which characters behave and also provided the ancillary furniture necessary to stretch the surprise detective plot into the length of a novel."Or when the novel is viewed in light of "the criteria of the detective story developed in the 1920s and 1930s – the need for clues, for a surprise ending, and all of the other conventions adhered to by critics and writers alike" (p. 155).

He bases his assertion on the notion that in the era –post-World War II – in which police-procedural novels were becoming popular, a number of authors' works were categorised as either "whodunits", "thrillers" or "love romance." But throughout these novels, what remains consistent is that these novels "focused on the same essential point – that crime and police work have a unique impact on the way men and women work as well as the way they live" (p. 155). Evidence of how the profession affects those working in it is seen in novels in which detailed descriptions are given of procedures such as "the Y cut, made in the torso, and the sawing open of the skull" as well as seeing mutilated genitals or decomposing flesh (p. 161). Quite often these characters become clinical and for those who cannot handle the sites or foul odours, they resort to smoking, smearing Vicks under their nose, chewing gum and/or consuming alcohol.

Priestman (2003a) claims that in Britain the police-procedural novel failed to make an impact until the 1980s because the Golden Age novel remained popular. But when the genre found its place, it was detection fiction written post-World War II. These novels were "largely the story of how middle-ranking career police officers - usually detective inspectors - came to be taken seriously" (p. 174).

According to Priestman, (2003a) authors who gained a lot of success in this genre were the likes of "P. D. James's *Cover Her Face* (1962), Ruth Rendell's *From Doon with Death* (1964), Reginald Hill's *A Clubbable Woman* (1970) and Colin Dexter's *Last Bus to Woodstock* (1975)." This group of authors would highlight the role of women within the profession. The primary themes in their novels would be serial killings as well as domestic violence. How they approached the former, Priestman (2003a: 179) says that

> the traditional-style investigation of the early murders [was] constantly intercut with the tension of trying to prevent the next, and it [was] almost mandatory that the chief detective figure eventually finds her or himself under threat, allowing the whole case to climax in a dramatic personal confrontation with the unmasked monster – whose anonymous thoughts [were] often being conveyed to us in brief, chilling interludes between chapters.
>
> (2003a: 179)

As far as domestic abuse is concerned, Priestman (2003a) says that the novels had an undertone of feminist ideals. Whenever the abused was in the wrong, the storyline would shift towards directing the origins of the problem to the patriarchal figure.

3.2.5 The Spy Novel

The penultimate subgenre to be discussed is spy fiction which, according to Seed (2003: 115), "became popular in two periods – the turn of the century and the 1960s – when popular anxieties were growing over the credibility of government processes."Thompson (1993: 85) says that the subgenre deals with "the threat posed to a nation by a foreign power or conspiracy, whether external or internal." Concurring with this take on spy fiction, Stanfford (cited in Seed, 2003: 116) states that the rise of these novels can be attributed "to an underlying feeling of national insecurity in the face of changing international relations" because at the time (between the World Wars and thereafter) Britain felt vulnerable to external forces within Europe. In elaborating on the description of the subgenre, Seed (2003: 115) goes on to compare the spy novel to that of the detective novel and says that "the spy story is a close but distinct variation on the tale of detection with the difference that there is no discrete crime involved but rather a covert action which transgresses conventional, moral, or legal boundaries."

Expanding on this idea, Thompson states that

> the dramatic suspense and interest of these novels derive largely from the predicament of the protagonist, who typically is responsible for the destiny of a group or nation by searching for the knowledge that will allow him/ [her] to protect the interests of the collective he/ [she] represents.
>
> (1993: 85)

Thomas (2004) says that authors who are writing in accordance with what is stated by Thompson (1993) are "John Buchan, Ian Fleming, and John Le Carre." What they have been attempting to do in their literature is "to interrogate the integrity of nationalistic fantasies in the international arena" (p. 142). Thomas (2004: 142) adds that this genre's intention was also "to be sure, the more familiar detective novel and its heir the police procedural will endure as immensely popular forms of literature in an infinite array of incarnations deploying newer and more accurate forensic technologies."

Like Seed (2003), Thompson (1993) sees not just similarities with the detective novel, but also, elements arising from adventure novels. He asserts that these similarities are found

> in espionage fiction's valorisation of exotic settings, the life of action, and the heroic individual – as well as in its denigration of domesticity, lack of interest in women, and rejection of the conventions of the psychological novel– it is possible, then, to see the continuation of the masculinist adventure tradition.
>
> (1993: 86)

In the next subsection, however, where the thriller novel is discussed, what will be noted is that although both subgenres share a resemblance with action, the rest of the conventions are rather different. Where the spy novel pertains more to international matters as well as matters of national importance, the thriller novel's story is about personal issues. These issues quite often affect a small circle of people who are brought together by a crime event.

3.2.6 The Thriller Novel

The last of crime fiction subgenres is the thriller novel. According to Glover (2003: 138), "the term 'thriller' emerged as a loose descriptor that could be applied to a wide range of narratives" some of which fall easily within the subgenre while others blur boundaries with other subgenres. In talking about the huge variety of novels that are viewed as part of the subgenre, Glover (2003: 139) says that

> there is a diffuseness about the thriller, an extraordinary promiscuity of reference that produces an over-abundance of possibilities: racing thrillers (Dick Francis), legal thrillers (John Grisham), psychological thrillers (Dennis Lehane), political thrillers (Jack Higgins), futuristic thrillers (Philip Kerr).
>
> (2003: 139)

More close to home is the South African crime thriller novel. Much of the confusion over classifying certain novels or authors under this subgenre is due to "writers [having the ability] of working in either genre, i.e. detective novels or the thriller novel" (Glover, 2003: 137).

In an attempt to contextualise the period when the thriller came about and to echo what Glover says about the vastness of the subgenre, we can turn to Knight (1990: 173) in which it can be seen how the subgenre brings to the fore "malign" ideas such as "nationalism, racism and sexism" in a number of other crime fiction subgenres. According to Knight (1990: 174) the origins of this subgenre stretch as far back as the 1700s. In all likelihood, the first of these stories is found in English writer "William Godwin's *The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, published in 1794, [which] is cited realistically as the first mystery novel." In this novel, the reader is told a story in which the private investigator, Caleb, is uncovering truths about a powerful figure. What the author manages to do in this text is show that crime is something that can be approached and resolved by a single mastermind and that the individual, who is also known to be the hero, will resort to just about any means to resolve the crime. Another author, according to Knight (1990: 174), who straddled aspects of the thriller novel is Edgar Allan Poe because his three short stories of the 1840s about Dupin "shape in form a dissent from currently hegemonic conventions in Poe's reliance on a reason that goes beyond utilitarian mathematics, and on a perception that breaches the unknowable."

While "the third stone in the arch of the new thriller was Emile Gaboriau's Parisian pattern of the 1870s, in which a highly professional and wisely urban detective (a real and working petit bourgeois) traced the past crimes of an aristocracy still trying to restrict the powers of that historically new force in France, the bourgeoisie themselves" (Knight, 1990: 174).

For this reason, Knight (1990: 175) argues that because of these authors, "it is not surprising that for its later renovations the thriller should continue to find new energy through versions of an innovation and critique that were at once socio-cultural and formal."

Glover (2003) claims that the thriller novel differs from other subgenres, such as the detective novel, in that the subgenre resists solving problems in a deductive manner. He holds that the thriller novel serves as a catalyst for the other subgenres because it "persistently seeks to raise the stakes of the narrative, heightening or exaggerating the experience of events by transforming them into a rising curve of danger, violence or shock" (p. 137). In agreement with this, Warnes (2012: 990) adds that "contemporary crime thrillers of all stripes revel in the representation of brutality, much of which is sexualised" just like in the works of Cornwell, Larsson, Meyer and Smith.

Glover (2003) feels that some of the criticism levelled against the thriller by critics such as Sayers fail to acknowledge what the subgenre is about because, Sayers for instance, expressed that novels of this subgenre leave a reader in total bewilderment up until the last moment when the explanations provided to the reader are often inadequate. In countering this critique of the subgenre, Glover relies on "one of the few defences of the thriller" which come from author of espionage novels, Valentine Williams. Essentially,

> what ultimately matters in thriller-writing is 'plausibility' or verisimilitude, a quality that is largely genre-specific…it is not what the reader believes that counts: 'the important aim is to make him/ [her] believe it', to carry the reader along by using pace and surprise to outweigh any inherent improbabilities of plot.
>
> (2003: 137)

This is something the two South African crime novels, which have been selected for this research study, are able to do. What becomes apparent in these novels is that a great deal of action and pace is used to carry the stories forward.

3.3 Reviewing Two South African Novels

The South African crime novels under review are from renowned authors and although these novelists may not have the status of established American and British writers, , they are part of a new wave of South African crime authors who in their books handle a variety of issues found in post-apartheid South Africa. Their writing of a contemporary South Africa manages to reflect a dystopia. But the dystopia is brought forth with the notion that restoration can be found (Warnes, 2012). These issues, Warnes notes are

> the rapid transformation of institutions, especially the police, judiciary, parliament, and business leadership; government's failure to deliver on political promises; apparently

> increasing corruption and bureaucratic incompetence; the consequences of large-scale migration from country to city and immigration from other parts of Africa; the dislocations of globalisation and neoliberalism, which have left currency and labour-force vulnerable to the whims of international markets.
>
> (2012: 984)

Compounding these factors is gross violence, sex crimes as well as gender and race prejudices that all South Africans have to contend with as victims or readers, viewers and listeners of news broadcasts.

The two novels to be discussed are Roger Smith's *Mixed Blood* published in 2009 and Deon Meyer's *Blood Safari* which was published in 2007. Both authors were born and live in South Africa with the more established of the two, Deon Meyer, publishing his works since the 1990s. His first novel was *Wie Met Vuur Speel* published in 1994, followed by further novels in Afrikaans which were then to be translated into more than 20 languages. This started with *Dead Before Dying* in 1999, and every novel published since then, as well as the television adapted *Dead At Daybreak* in 2000. Roger Smith's first novel is the one under review in this chapter. His second novel, *Wake Up Dead*, was published in 2010. Like Meyer's *Dead Before Dying* and *Thirteen Hours*, Smith's *Mixed Blood* is also destined for the big screen and this is a reminder of how international readers of crime fiction have received these authors. Both authors are considered to be novelists that write South African crime thrillers. The storylines are about current issues within South Africa and these issues broadly pertain to the matters mentioned by Warnes (2012).

Summaries of both novels are provided in the following subsections for further insights to what emanates from these authors' novels.

3.3.1 Deon Meyer *Blood Safari*

There are three main locations in this novel. They are the city of Cape Town, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. Deon Meyer tells the story of an Afrikaans woman, Emma Le Roux, who is convinced that her long-term missing brother, Cobie (Jacobus) Le Roux, is alive. Emma hires the services of a bodyguard, Lemmer, to help her track her brother down while protecting her. The story is told by Lemmer, who is the chief protagonist, while other main characters are Emma, Jacobus, Inspector Jack Phatudi, Frank Wolhuter and Dannie Branca

(the latter two being game rangers), Stefan Moller and Jeanette Louw (who is Lemmer's employer).

After seeing a picture of her long-lost brother on a news story, which prompted her to make a call to the South African Police Services, Emma is attacked by a group of unknown men at her house in Cape Town. Fortunately, no harm is done to her and she manages to get away, but the men are not caught. After hiring Lemmer, the two go to Mpumalanga to speak to Inspector Phatudi, the officer that the news insert said should be contacted in the event that Jacobus is seen by anyone.

After receiving no assistance from Phatudi, who believes that Jacobus is not Emma's brother but in fact a local who is sought for the killing of sangomas, Emma and Lemmer continue to be sent from pillar to post without any luck. In their investigation, they come across Frank and Dannie whom it is believed do know where Jacobus is, but they too claim that they have not seen him. Later on they are introduced to a multi-millionaire, Stefan Moller, who had been Jacobus's employer. There too, Emma and Lemmer are faced with a series of denials. Just as they were about to give up, another attempt is made on Emma's life by a group of mysterious men.

This time, however, Emma is not that fortunate and she ends up in hospital in a critical state. Lemmer then decides to pursue the men who are terrorising Emma. Through a series of investigative steps he manages to rule out several suspects, but in doing so he finds out Jacobus's whereabouts. Lemmer eventually understands what has happened to Emma's brother. Following the discovery that Cobie is being victimised by a very wealthy individual, Lemmer hunts down the men trying to kill Emma. It is through them that Lemmer and Jeanette, who joins the latter stages of the investigation, get to know the true mastermind behind Jacobus's disappearance and the attempts on Emma's life. They then not only confront Quintus Wernich, chairman of the board of Southern Cross Avionics, but they also report him to the Mozambican authorities for he is alleged to be one of the co-conspirators involved in the death of president Samora Machel in the late 1980s.

Meyer's books generally reflect on present day South Africa as well as comment on what happened in the past. To achieve this he "narrativises the dilemma of middle-aged white men caught between traumatic pasts and a future which appears to have little use of them" (Warnes, 2012: 987).

One of the characters who portrays these sentiments is Wolhuter who explains to Emma the politics of where he lives and works. The issue with which he is struggling relates to land reappropriation versus conserving nature in the lowveld – Limpopo and Mpumalanga. He feels that the land is going to waste when land claims are made (because he thinks that black people do not know or want to farm), or when corporate companies buy the land to build infrastructure for tourists and property investors. But because of race politics, people like him are not being acknowledged when they try to raise concerns about the environment.

The same applies to Jacobus whose past was traumatic, no thanks to Quintus Wernich, and a couple of government officials who were out to have him killed after he discovered a secret mission they were involved in. Afraid to return home, he lives out the rest of the late eighties and early nineties in hideouts separated from his family. But even on his return, or attempt thereof, his parents are murdered and so he has to keep a low profile, which he manages to do with Moller's assistance. However, the new South Africa with all its problems would not be a conducive environment for him to live in. Now, the police are trying to arrest him for murder with the belief that the killings were racially motivated.

In relation to other social issues that emanate from the novel, Emma Le Roux's character makes a reader consider some of the ways in which Meyer depicts her. At first, the reader is given the impression that she is an independent woman. Meyer depicts Le Roux as an independent woman by writing about her as a woman who is self-employed, who lives by herself and who is out to find her long lost brother. But as the story progresses, one starts questioning whether it was truly necessary for Meyer to create a male character to protect Le Roux because the Lemmer factor takes some of that independence away. Le Roux at times ends up being stereotyped as a frightened woman who needs a man to guard over her even though the job could have been done by a female or, better yet, herself. For instance, when she finds a snake in her room at the lodge where she and Lemmer are staying while looking for her brother, Le Roux screams and cries out for Lemmer to help her. Even after the ordeal, Lemmer has to comfort her and eventually he puts her to bed. This does not happen only on this occasion – it happens again at a later scene when she is frustrated by the investigation and breaks down. However, instances such as Le Roux being the one to pay for food and accommodation, and when she is outspoken counter some of the stereotypes seen at times in the novel.

In generic features, this novel differs from Roger Smith's *Mixed Blood*. One of these differences is the use of language. Meyer depicts his main characters as articulate and intelligent people who converse about the finer things in life (literature and good food) without being aggressive or using profanities. Lemmer and Le Roux illustrate this to the reader in their discussion about wine and Grapetiser (what tests better and why) as detailed below:

> I like red wine. I like the names. Shiraz. Cabernet. Merlot. Pinotage. They roll beautifully off the tongue, they sound so secretive. And I love the complex aromas. There is a mystique to the flavours.
>
> It's like sailing on a trade route past islands of fruit and spices. You can never see the islands, but from the aromas that waft over the water, you can guess what they look like. Exotic, bright colours, dense forests, beautiful people dancing by firelight. I love the colours and the way they look different in sunlight or candlelight. And I love the flavour, because it forces me to taste, to concentrate, to roll it around my tongue and look for the goodness. And I like all the things it stands for - the bonhomie, the company of friends. It's a social symbol that says we're comfortable enough with each other to enjoy a glass of wine together. It makes me feel civilised and grateful that I have the privilege to enjoy something that has been made with so much care and knowledge and art.
>
> (2009: 123)

How this novel also differs from *Mixed Blood* is through the first-person narration. Smith's novel is told from the third-person perspective. *Blood Safari* is told by Lemmer, who is employed as a bodyguard by Emma Le Roux. Though this is a trait of a hard-boiled detective novel, this novel still does not have a typical detective who will carry the plot from the beginning to the very end. It may be argued that Lemmer is that character. But on my examination of the novel, I realised that Lemmer merely acts as a bodyguard for half of the novel. Only after Le Roux's accident does he truly wear the hat of a detective as he tries to expose the identities of the people who are trying to kill Le Roux. When he does this, the novel falls back on to the conventional hard-boiled story in which the detective is putting various bits of information together in the attempt to resolve a mystery. This is something that Lemmer does of his own volition for he was hired as a bodyguard and nothing else. Driven by emotion, he seeks retribution and he gets it when he kills several of the people that were looking to take Le Roux's life.

3.3.2 Roger Smith *Mixed Blood*

This story is set in Cape Town and moves between the Cape Flats and the suburb of Signal Hill. Roger Smith contrasts these two places to emphasise the social inequalities still prevalent in Cape Town. The suburbs generally house rich white families –some of which are foreigners – while the ghetto of the Cape Flats is populated by people of colour who are poverty stricken and are subjected to some of the most heinous crimes brought about by gang violence and crooked police officers. According to Drawe (2013: 189) Smith's novel manages to draw the reader to this fact because, what the reader sees in the novel is a story that "unfolds in basically two places, the rich suburbs like Camps Bay, Bantry Bay and Sea Point and the poor, gang-ridden Cape Flats."

Drawe (2013: 189) thinks that in "this way Smith highlights the different and contrasting sections of the mother city and shows that they exist in close proximity, but that the boundaries are only crossed to commit crimes."

The most instrumental characters in this book are Jack Burn with his wife and child, Carmen a young lady from the Cape Flats who is a drug addict, Inspector Barnard (also known as Gatsby), Bennie Mongrel, a convicted gangster with his dog Bessie, and Special Agent Zondi who is a policeman from the police ministry.

In the opening scene of the book, Smith introduces the reader to Jack Burn, one of the chief characters of the story, whom the reader soon learns is a fugitive alongside his pregnant wife Susan and his four-year old son Matt. This American family are on the run because of a crime committed by Jack Burn –he was part of a group of people that robbed a bank, but after the job went wrong, Burn took his family and fled to South Africa. However, things become worse in Burn's life (including the lives of Susan and Matt) when two gangsters, Rikki (Carmen's husband) and Faried, invade their quiet, up-market home on the hill. Jack murders the two gangsters and then is confronted by the difficulty of disposing of the bodies.

His family at this time is traumatised by what they have witnessed and his wife no longer wants to be party to Jack's unbecoming ways. As Jack tries to mend things with his family, a rogue policeman by the name of Inspector Barnard comes into contact with Jack and matters become worse. Jack's son, Matt, gets kidnapped, and not wanting to confront the police because of his past, Jack decides to resolve the matter in his own way.

Coming to Jack's aid is ex-prisoner Bennie Mongrel who was working as a security guard on the property next to Jack's home. Both driven by different motives – Bennie's only companion was killed by Barnard – the two men set out to punish Barnard. While all of this is taking place, Barnard is also the subject of an investigation by the police ministry. A black officer named Special Agent Zondi is sent by the ministry office in Johannesburg to conduct the investigation. He, then puts together what Barnard has been up to when a local coloured woman, by the name of Berenice September from the Flats, reports that her son is missing. Incidentally, her son, Ronnie September, had come across the two gangsters'' bodies that Burn had killed, Rikki and Faried, and being fascinated by their clothing items, he then takes a pair of running shoes for himself. When his mother discovered what he, Ronnie, had done, she reports that there were two bodies nearby to the police. Barnard then asks the boy to go with him to identify the bodies. At this point of the story Barnard kills Ronnie. He then burns the body of the child as well as those of the two gangsters.

After Barnard's crime is discovered, he becomes a fugitive who is hunted by law enforcement and community members whom he has enraged, Jack and Mongrel. When he is finally cornered he is dealt with in the most excruciating manner and this is how most of his foes get revenge. As fate would have it, Jack also gets to pay for his wrongs as a series of events lead to his downfall. In adhering to the crime fiction genre, this novel falls under the crime thriller novel and, as noted in Glover's (2003) as well as Naidu's (2013)accounts of what the thriller novel entails – pace, action, a heightened experience and shock, and less emphasis on detecting – Smith does not fail the reader in any of these aspects. In the early stages of *Mixed Blood*, Smith engenders an ominous feeling when he contrasts Jack Burn's tranquil view of the setting sun and the Atlantic ocean in an up-market suburb with an image of a vehicle driven by two gangsters playing loud hip-hop music in this quiet neighbourhood. As a reader, one is anticipating immediate action when reading this scene. High on tik-tik, (crystal meth that is inhaled through a globe), Faried and Rikki (Carmen's husband) invade Burn's home. Whatever sense of peace and security Burn may have thought he and his family have is soon forgotten. Being a person who has served in the United States military in Desert Storm, former training and instinct overcome him and he kills the two gangsters in self-defence.

In this chapter, the reader is not just experiencing the excitement of a thriller novel, but the gross act of violence committed by Burn is indicative of what Reddy (2003) claims about male characters within the subgenre of hard-boiled detective novels, which is that they are

inclined to be killers that give little thought to the effects of violence. What Smith does manage to achieve though in this particular scene is that, prior to committing the murders, Burn appeals to his wife, Susan, to take their son away, and by doing that the character of Burn challenges Reddy's generalisation about male characters in hard-boiled detective fiction. This is not to say that this novel falls under that subgenre because there is no private eye in this book, instead, there is a highly corrupt policeman, Inspector Barnard, whose actions are no different from the rogue criminals that roam the streets of Cape Town.

Apart from Faried and Riki, Barnard is another of those figures who illustrates to what extent the "boundaries are crossed" to commit crimes. As an individual Barnard not only serves as a symbol of the corrupt nature of modern society, he is also driven by hatred and racism, and it is these fatal ills that drive him to go around the Flats victimising and killing people for enjoyment. Smith depicts these instances with Barnard's character throughout the book. In his interactions with Carmen, the reader is privy to Barnard's thoughts such as "why hadn't he smacked the brown bitch in her filthy mouth" and "time to check up on the half-breed bitch" (p. 192). But the crude policeman's misogynistic ways do not end there as Smith (2009: 210) describes in the following extract how aggressive Barnard is towards Carmen:

> Barnard grabbed her by the throat and walked her backward into the room. He kicked the door shut behind him as he pushed her into a kneeling position on the floor. In the same motion he produced the .38 from its holster and shoved it into her mouth, grabbing a fistful of her kinky hair…
>
> (2009: 210)

This is not the only character Smith uses to highlight social issues such as abuse of women and children and racism. At least two more incidents illustrate to the reader the extent to which South Africans are still grappling with race-related matters, for instance. Special Investigator Zondi, who has been sent by the ministry to conduct an investigation into the activities of Inspector Barnard, is the subject of these incidents. For the first of these, while Zondi ought to be conducting a proper and fair investigation into Inspector Barnard's alleged acts of misconduct, his status as a professional becomes questionable when he uses this platform to settle old scores. The reader is given a background into what took place. What we learn is that Barnard tortured Zondi back in the 1980s and that his friend was brutally killed by Barnard as well as three other policemen. The matter did appear in front of the

Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but Zondi still feels hard done by. Essentially, he wants justice and he wants to be the one to administer it.

The second incident takes place when Zondi stops for a cappuccino and ends up staying past the closing time of the shop (though this is an assumption made on the basis of the dialogue). The waitress who serves him becomes irritated and in her annoyance she has a conversation with a colleague about black people having a superiority complex. The copied extract illustrates that the race issue in South Africa is not as simple as it may have been perceived. Apartheid laws were engineered in such a manner that even the people it was oppressing became socialised into thinking in those heinous ways:

> They spoke softly, in the local patois, but Zondi could hear them. And understand.
> "Can't he see we want to go?"
> "Typical darky behaviour. I'm sorry, but it is."
> "They behave as if they own the place."
> "But they do. Now."
> "I know. It makes me sick."
> "I mean, did you hear on the radio this morning, they even saying that God is black."
> "No!"
> "I'm telling you."
> "I'm sorry. I can deal with God being white. But not black. I can still work for a white boss!"
> They laughed and walked to the back of the shop.
>
> (2009: 123)

Looking at the role of women in this novel, Smith does not go into depth with his female characters with the exception of maybe two (Susan and Carmen). Carmen has one of the characteristics that Reddy (2003) discusses pertaining to how women refrain from using violence when facing an adversary. As a tik-tik addict, Carmen, a young coloured woman, has had to fend for herself since Rikki, her husband, was killed. Her intention is to use her disabled child's monthly welfare money as a means to obtain drugs, but after social services took her child away due to negligence, Carmen decides to score drugs by performing sexual favours. On one occasion, a truck driver tries to coerce her into doing something she does not approve of, and not being willing to do it, Carmen tries to leave. When the driver

becomes physically abusive, for his ego is now bruised, Carmen draws out a knife that she then uses to threaten him and he eventually relents.

Susan, in contrast, does illustrate to the reader that she is independent, but this independence is something that is never a certainty until the last chapters of the novel. Smith stereotypes Susan as an emotional pregnant woman who naively follows her husband without questioning why they had to leave America. When finding herself in undesirable circumstances, Susan still fails to take immediate action. She toys with the idea of leaving her husband or giving him yet another "final chance".

In terms of other elements of the genre, Smith follows the conventions of presenting the reader with a problem (or a set of problems) both on a social level as well as a personal level through the problems that the characters have. It is the reader who puts the puzzle together by having to follow the lives of some of the characters, e.g. Burn and his wife Susan, Barnard, Benny, Zondi and Carmen. But each of these characters presents the notion of restoration in a unique way. After wrestling with her conscience, Susan refuses to follow Burn blindly and decides that she will hand herself over to the authorities for being an accessory to Burn's crimes. Barnard is dealt the worst punishment, one that ironically reminds a knowledgeable reader of the apartheid days when people resorted to mob justice to punish a person whom they believed had committed a crime (this is of course still prevalent in contemporary South Africa). With Benny, oddly enough, Smith spares him any punishment though he did unlawfully torture Barnard, but this is because of Benny being a victim of circumstances one assumes. He is a reforming convict who is trying to put his life together (although this is proving to be quite difficult). When Barnard killed Benny's companion – an old Golden Retriever called Bessie – this forces Benny to resort to the old habits he learnt in his days as a hard gangster. He has an urge to avenge Bessie's unwarranted death by making Barnard suffer an excruciating death. Zondi never gets to avenge what happened to him and his friend, but he is comforted by Barnard's public demise. As for Burn, he fails to recreate the family that he once had. In fact, when Susan informs Zondi as well as the American officials of what has transpired, Burn decides to abandon his family, but on his way he gets into a tragic accident.

In summation, having noted what these novels are about in as far as their adherence to genre conventions is concerned, and having also discussed at length the various subgenres of crime fiction, I now turn my attention to the gathering of data. My interest is to determine what

readers of crime fiction experience and what their thoughts are about crime fiction. Do their thoughts and experiences correspond on a general level to the ideas discussed in this chapter? With regard to the novels, the interest is whether the volunteering group of readers does relate (if at all) to what emanates in either of the books. As South Africans, do they think that the authors reflect their sentiments about the society they live in? Furthermore, do the novels satisfy what they expect from the crime fiction genre?

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the research methodology used in gathering the data for this research study. It explains how the data was gathered, sorted and interpreted in the subsequent chapter. What emanates from this chapter is an outlook on qualitative research as a form of research methodology, how the data is sampled and also a discussion on virtual book clubs as this is one of the instruments that was employed in the gathering of data alongside interviews.

4.1 Qualitative Research

The research method for this type of research study was qualitative research. This research study attempted to determine what drew students to the crime fiction genre. It also sought to establish how students engage with crime fiction. Hancoc (1998: 2) posits that in such an event, qualitative research enables participants to express their opinions and feelings for this methodology and "aims to help us to understand the world in which we live and why things are the way they are." Confirming this is Fitzgerald, Seale, Icerins, and McElvaney (2008: 299) who state that qualitative research aims "to understand and represent the experiences and actions of people as they encounter, engage, and live through situations." As a result, there are several general questions that one engages in that underpin qualitative research and these are:

Why people behave the way they do;
How opinions and attitudes are formed;
How people are affected by the events that go on around them;
How and why cultures have developed in the way they have; and
The differences between social groups (Hancoc, 1998: 2).

In this regard, what made the group of students who served as participants for this research study suitable was that I assumed that they had undergone experiences that had drawn them to the genre. Having considered a few of these questions, I have come to comprehend facets pertaining to the effects that crime fiction, as literature, has had in their lives. What I was intending on understanding too, was how the participants' views and attitudes were being shaped. I have also obtained differences in perspectives among groups (gender and race) on how the genre positioned them. Lastly, I received reasons as to what intrigued them about the genre.

What characterised this research methodology were the five characteristics that Fraenkel and Wallen (1996: 442) inform us to be "general features that characterize most qualitative research studies." However, at the same time, they do also caution that "not all qualitative studies will necessarily display all of these characteristics with equal strength [but] taken together, they give a good overall picture of what is involved in this type of research (p. 442).

Simply put, the five features as discussed by Bogdan and Knopp (cited in Fraenkel and Wallen, 1996) are as follows:

- The researcher gathers his/her data from the natural setting of the participant as the 'primary instrument' by either recording the data on audio or jotting down notes over a period of time.
- To qualitative researchers their participants are not viewed as mere numbers, hence, their observations are made in either words or pictures to capture the essence of an action or discussion.
- Researchers are 'concerned by both process and product'. This explains why the researcher will focus on facets such as, how are ideas expressed in action, what interpretations are given to terms and responses to questions.
- In qualitative research the tendency is to avoid making hypotheses at the beginning of the research study. But what usually occurs is that researchers construct notions from the data gathered as time goes by.
- Most importantly, what is of great interest in qualitative research is the participants' views and opinions on what is of interest to them, i.e. the books they may be reading, music they may be listening to, TV programmes that they may be watching.

Within qualitative research methodology there are four research designs that a researcher could use in gathering his/her data. Most authors on the subject agree that these are phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1996; Hancoc, 1998; Fitzgerald, Seale, Icerins, and McElvaney, 2008 and McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). This research study concerned itself with the case study research design for I believed it was the most appropriate when considering the type of research I undertook. As McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 24) explain, "a case study examines a bounded system, or a case, over time in depth, employing multiple entity sources of data found in the setting." Furthermore, this data gathering can occur in a programme, or an event, or an activity, hence the researcher may use his/her discretion in as far as prescribing the environmental factors

and duration of the research data gathering process. It is for this reason why "a case can be selected because of its uniqueness or used to illustrate an issue" just as I have done in this particular research study (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010: 24).

However, in opting for the case study research design, I have also decided to incorporate some elements of the ethnography research design and these are participant and non-participant observations. According to Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005: 13), these "participant observations are qualitative methods with roots in traditional ethnographic research, whose objective is to help researchers learn the perspectives held by study populations."

Additionally, what is also learnt from Mack et.al (2005: 13) is that these observations "always take place in community settings, in locations believed to have some relevance to the research questions."

Fraenkel and Wallen (1996: 451-452) draw a distinction between the two and state that "in participant observation studies, researchers actually participate in the situation or setting they are observing."

In addition, this method can be open "in that the researcher is easily identified and the subjects know that they are being observed, or covert, in which case the researcher disguises his or her identity and acts just like any of the other participants" (p. 451-452).

While with regards to non-participant observation "researchers do not participate in the activity being observed but rather 'sit on the sidelines' and watch; they are not directly involved in the situation they are observing" (p. 452).

I, as the researcher, opted for the former of these strategies in gathering data in the virtual book club simply because I had to facilitate discussions by probing participants with questions and, if it was necessary, give anecdotes of my experiences. Non-participant observation would have been difficult to conduct in a research study such as this one for I would have to extract myself from group discussions held in the virtual book club. The challenges that I anticipated when dealing with student participants were that students could be shy at times to give opinions due to a number of reasons (e.g. low-esteem or a presumed lack of insight on what is being discussed). Also, students could be forgetful as they did have other academic commitments and these did take precedence over an activity that they were volunteering to participate in.

In terms of the research instruments that this research study applied, I think that gathering data from a virtual book club as well as interviews presented as holistic a picture as possible for each instrument covered different aspects. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) explain that there are basically four types of interviewing methods and these are retrospect, informal, semi-structured and structured interviews. Hancoc (1998) explains that structured interviews are rigid. She says that these interviews "consist of the interviewer asking each respondent the same questions in the same way, (i.e.) a tightly structured schedule of questions is used, very much like a questionnaire" (p. 8).

For that reason I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews. I wanted the participants to feel free to elaborate on answers. I could also ask more questions when I thought it was necessary to probe a response. Hancoc (1998: 8) claims that how this form of questioning obtains this objective is because "semi-structured interviews (sometimes referred to as focused interviews) involve a series of open ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover."

Elaborating on the above, she says, "the open ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail" (p. 8).

Also, "if the interviewee has difficulty answering a question or provides only a brief response, the interviewer can use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the question further" (p. 8).

The interviewing instrument focused on six participants who answered questions pertaining to their thoughts and experiences about crime fiction. In addition, I asked them to read at least one of the two novels that were selected for the research study. Subsequently, during interviewing, I discovered that the one half of the participants read Roger Smith's *Mixed Blood* and the other half read Deon Meyer's *Blood Safari.* The interviews straddled issues (to mention a few) pertaining to

- What drew the participants to the genre.
- How much they had been exposed to the genre.
- What they thought of the novel/s they have read in relation to the society they live in.
- Whether the novel they had read lived up to their expectations of the genre.

I had to guide the interviewees in the process of expressing themselves as they merely engage with the genre for leisure. This was based on the assumption that they were not au fait with some of the theoretical ideas that are discussed by scholars. This of course made me susceptible to asking what may be deemed as leading questions at times.

As the other data gathering instrument that I eluded to earlier, the virtual book club (a concept that is to be elaborated on shortly) was a private Facebook group in which a volunteering participant with a Facebook account was permitted to join in group discussions about crime fiction. In the event that a potential participant was interested but not subscribed to Facebook, I helped him/her to create a profile on the website. As the administrator, I established the group on the website and ensured that it was private and exclusive to the individuals who were interested in the research study. On receiving requests to join the group, I added the participant to the group and once that had been done, it was then when he/she was able to view the following:

(a) Group discussions;
(b) Videos, websites and extracts from the selected novels; and
(c) The rules and regulations that all members ought to adhere to.

Consisting of twelve members, the virtual book club (or Facebook group) was intended to be a free space in which participants could share, among other things, anecdotes of their favourite authors and characters (i.e. who they were, how they impacted their lives and why), their thoughts on the genre's social status as well as why they were drawn to the genre. Examples of topics (and type of questions) that were raised for both the virtual book club and the interviews will follow in the sampling, data collection and data analysis section of this chapter.

4.2 Understanding Virtual Book Clubs

The history of book clubs coincides, to a large extent, with the history of the novel which dates back to the 1700s. According to Taormina (2005) "*Pamela*, (I, 1740; II, 1741) by Samuel Richardson, is usually considered the first fully-realized English novel."[12] Taormina (2005) further claims that "the early English novel departs from the allegory and the romance

[12] Accessed online from: http://www.nvcc.edu/home/ataormina/novels/history/origins.htm, 05.10.2013

with its vigorous attempt at verisimilitude and it was initially strongly associated with the middle class, their pragmatism, and their morality."

But Davis (1983) predates the early stages of the novel to the 15th/16th century when "news" accounts were being printed, for the first time, about what was taking place in England. He says though that the word

> 'News' does not denote what the modern reader would assume to be news – an essentially factual, though perhaps ideological, account of the details of current public affairs, yellow journalism notwithstanding…fact and news, however, for the sixteenth century could be mutually exclusive categories [because] the word news was applied freely to writings which described either true or fictional events, quotidian or supernatural occurrences, and affairs that may have been recent or several decades old.
>
> (1983: 50)

The novels, as they were known, were made available to all social classes and regardless of their status of being stories that were factual and fictional they managed to draw the attention of all in sundry. But as Davis notes

> when news began to be defined ideologically, it became more significantly dangerous to the government [because] as that happened, there grew a more pressing need to define legally the nature of 'factual' news, which then might be banned, as opposed to fictional narrative, which was not specifically dangerous, at least not obviously so, and might be allowed to circulate.
>
> (1983: 70)

It was at this particular juncture that Davis (1983) believes that the novel as we know it today came into being. News started taking on a meaning that would stretch into how contemporary societies understand it. Authors such as Defoe (whom Davis regards to be among the first official novelists), showed in his writings aspects of the modern novel even though he failed to declare publically that his work was fictional. According to Davis (1983), Defoe, simply referred to his writings as works that were "true" and he speculates that Defoe's vacillation may have been because of him being a journalist and a novelist at the same time. In speaking about Defoe's position, Davis writes that

> the oddity of his own life, so filled with disguise, lies, indirection, forgery, deceit, and duplicity seems to place him constitutionally at the centre of questions about the truthfulness of narratives, about the problem of framing and ambivalence, about the breakdown of signification and reliability.
>
> (1983: 155)

Regardless of how the novel was classified all those centuries ago, the advent of the printing era appears to have revolutionised perceptions about reading because everyone in England had the opportunity to gain access to the novels. Neither was reading a solitary activity and nor were social issues left to the upper class to discuss for social matters were a prominent feature in these novels. This undoubtedly must have been the catalyst for social discussions about reading. Rufle (2008) attests to this and says that at the time when the novel was establishing its place as a work of literature, book clubs started to emerge. She further says that "while many people credit Oprah Winfrey for popularizing the book club as it is recognized today, its origins can be traced back as early as the 1720s."[13]

Rufle (2008) also dispels thoughts of book clubs being a female preserve, by noting that "men were the first gender to popularize the concept of a reading group", which was soon adopted by women who used the opportunity to be heard among their peers and discuss issues affecting them. In agreeing and adding to what Rufle says about the historical role of women in book clubs, Fister (2006: 303) states that "readers – women, in particular – have been coming together for generations to share their responses to books as an occasion for social engagement." She believes that this has had a positive effect in a country such as the United States of America where the majority of public libraries were opened by women. Although Oprah Winfrey appears to have had a positive influence too on the culture of reading by putting book clubs under the spotlight, according to Fister this

> has made some critics worry that book groups, often supported by chain bookstores and big publishers, are commodifying reading – that we are witnessing a corporate takeover of literary practices that engages readers in formulaic, shallow analysis of texts.
>
> (2006: 303)

[13] Accessed online in 2013 from: http://suite101.com/a/a-brief-history-of-book-clubs-a64430, 05.10.2013

That is why it is important for readers to be critical of the books they engage with as suggested by the critical literacy theorists in Chapter Two. In addition, readers need to be independent enough to select books of their own preference being aware of the reasons of why they have chosen whichever book. According to Pachtman and Wilson (2006) this notion is evident among students who have proved to have the autonomy to pick and choose books that they enjoy. Furthermore, students then make suggestions to fellow students based on what they have read.

Based on this reason, Pachtman and Wilson (2006: 684) state that "students have strong opinions about reading [and] when given the opportunity to capitalize on their preferences, students read more because they enjoy reading."

Moving away from the social benefits of book clubs, and focusing on the cognitive advantages of reading groups, Vardell, Hadaway and Young (2006) attribute a facet such as students gaining the ability to become competent in a language as literature introduces them to new vocabulary and to various ways in which language could be used. Bowers-Campell (2011) views the practice of book clubs as a platform where students have the opportunity to engage in experiences of reading literature in an in-depth manner while having discussions that provoke questions about how they view their world. All of this occurs as students are more inclined to have a better understanding of the literature they engage with. They also attain higher thinking skills which enables them to be critical thinkers. Beach and Yussen (2011) add that within book clubs of mature students, i.e. students at tertiary institutions, the tendency has been for them to be more inclined to make the idea more practical and workable as they are cooperative, more willing and egalitarian.

Another dimension that has made the forming of book clubs a growing practice is the use of technology. The internet, for instance, is affording communities separated by geographical lines to communicate with each other. Fister in quoting Long writes that:

> Literature requires a broad base of readers to flourish and, thanks to new channels available for forming book groups, books are still closely tied to moments of experiential insight and still show a stunning ability to make people, in discussion, feel part of a significant book-related community.
>
> (2006: 304)

Hence, as mentioned before, through a medium such as the internet, collaborative groups have been able to form virtual book clubs on social networks including blogging forums.

According to Fister (2006) this idea spans as far back as the beginning of the 1990s when an online discussion group called DorothyL (named after mystery author Dorothy L. Sayers) was established by a group of librarians for the purpose of having online discussions about mystery novels. Scarpato (1998) mentions that it all started to materialise in Washington D.C. in 1991 at a meeting of the Association of Research Libraries. The present-day online community of several thousand subscribers has enumerable topics about crime fiction books that range from writing styles or fun chatter laden with play on words, to authors updating readers on their progress in terms of impending novels or opinions about awards that should be handed to which writer.[14]

With this phenomenon of online groups growing over the years, another online group called Crime Fiction Lover was established and it primarily caters for the European and Australian markets. Similar to DorothyL, Crime Fiction Lover reviews novels and publishes short stories of up-and-coming authors. Unlike DorothyL, though, Crime Fiction Lover's team is quite diverse, representing several countries in Europe (including England and France) as well as Australia.[15]

In terms of a locally based online group, the Penguin group has established a dedicated branch for South Africans in which all types of literature is discussed. Within this forum book recommendations are made and South African literature is promoted across all genres for all ages. Subscribers, as in the DorothyL community, get to post views and ask questions pertaining to literature.[16]

A more practical establishment of a virtual book club at student level is one created by the Wits School of Education's Division of Languages, Literacies and Literatures. In a compulsory course for first-year students, students are encouraged to share their reading practices by posting what they are reading and what their thoughts are on the literature they are engaging with. Speaking to the course co-ordinator, Jean Reid, I learnt that students often shared with each other how books and/or poetry made them feel. They also gave views on books that they liked. But more importantly for the course, the students could talk about how

[14] Accessed online from: http://www.lsoft.com/customers/dorothyl.asp, 24.08.2013
[15] Accessed online from: http://www.crimefictionlover.com/about/, 15.11.2013
[16] Accessed online from: http://penguinbooks.co.za/about-penguin-books, 15.11.2013

they were grappling with academic texts. Much of the discussions either happen in tutorials or on the course's Facebook group.

Bowers-Campell (2011) says that the advantage for the virtual reading group is that readers – and in this regard students – have the opportunity to think about what they would like to contribute to discussions over a longer period of time. Furthermore, within this virtual space, a greater number of students get to give opinions. This is an advantageous aspect that differs considerably to physical book clubs where the likelihood is that there are dominant voices or even reluctant speakers. It is no wonder then that, because of social media, virtual book clubs are growing at a fast pace. In addition, the composition of these groups is also diverse and not dominated by women (Fister, 2006).

4.3 Sampling, Data Collection and Data Analysis

The selection process for participants in this component of the research study was based on a couple of strategies. One of these was to put up notices (see appendices) in various areas or on buildings or departments within the premises of the university. The notices that were put up appealed to students who love crime fiction novels to participate in my research study. The other method in which participants were to be selected was by approaching individuals who had already expressed an interest in the topic of this research study. These were fellow students and friends with whom I have been having discussions relating to a common interest - the love for crime fiction novels. Some of these individuals were people who had not been reading for recreational purposes for a number of years. However, after being introduced to the genre, they had become avid readers.

As it is already known, participants for this research study were students from the University of the Witwatersrand who had an interest in the crime fiction genre. My intention was to have a diverse group of individuals with a make-up of black, coloured, Indian and white students both within the virtual book club as well as the interviews. In as far as age was concerned, there were no minimum or maximum ages that the students had to be. The research study targeted student groups within both undergraduate as well as postgraduate programmes i.e. Humanities, Commerce, Law and Management, Health Sciences, Mining and the Built Environment. More on the background of the participants follows in Chapter Five.

The sample group was also gender balanced as the theorists discussed before were making a number of inferences. A section, for instance, dealt with the need for women representation within the genre and the inroads that have been made in relation to this aspect. The books that had been selected for this research study were however not written by women. But I was of the perspective that the issues raised pertaining to how women are represented were worth discussing. Hence the type of subquestions I asked in either data gathering instrument, especially with the interviews, were as follows:

- Do you relate to the novel's that you read?
- How were women portrayed for you in the novels that you read?
- Do you think the author is challenging stereotypes?
- Are you content with the depictions of women?

While the other questions were geared towards establishing how long participants had been readers of the genre, what appealed to them and whether they truly enjoyed crime fiction as it is a genre that can be (and most often is) rather dark and gloomy even though there are satisfactory endings in general.

As mentioned, the virtual book club (the private Facebook group) facilitated some of these discussions just as the interviews had done. But to stimulate discussions within the Facebook group, I posted extracts from the novels that are selected for the research study. I also posted website addresses and information about authors which encouraged members to give more commentary beyond the set topics. Members were also encouraged to post information or questions that they thought would be interesting to other crime fiction readers. This was in addition to the weekly topics that I prepared for group discussions. A couple examples of these are as follows:

- Don't you just love reading a book that gets you so involved that you think of the characters as real persons even though you know that they are nothing but fiction… I often used to ponder and talk to friends about some characters that would grab my attention to such a point that I would even wish that they are out there somewhere… Dare I say, I would even feature some of these characters in my dreams…lol
  I don't think that it is a phenomenon that is exclusive to kids, we too, as adults have favourite characters. In my case, there are two… I refer to them as the dynamic duo – Elvis Cole and Joe Pike – who are characters by Robert Crais. I admire the friendship that

exists between these two for the simple reason because it is pure and true. When people talk about putting your all into it, no one demonstrates it better for me than Elvis and Joe. So I ask you folks… Who is/are your favourite character/s? Please share with us details of the person/s and why you admire him/her/them?

NB: These need not be heroes for villains also tend to be captivating for some people.

- Much of the discussion surrounding crime fiction relates to the genre's popular fiction status. This differs from literary fiction which a number of people refer to as serious literature mainly because it is not predictable and that it requires analysis as well as deep thinking on the reader's behalf. Let us also not forget that literary fiction (or the canon), carries a level of highbrow status unlike crime fiction which is viewed as a component of popular culture (movies, TV series, magazines, video-games). Nevertheless, with that being said, it is the reader that ultimately chooses what he/she wants to engage with. Thus, the question is, do you as a reader of crime fiction view the genre as solely entertainment i.e. a form of popular culture that you engage with for enjoyment, or, is the genre also a form of social commentary i.e. it touches upon issues that you as a reader think about and that you regard to be socially relevant? Give your position on this topic and please provide a reasons/s. You may do this by making reference to a book or scene too.

With regards to how this data was analysed, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) point out that there is no single method of analysing data in qualitative research. What researchers could do is to represent their data by categorising it according to themes or reoccurring ideas. In qualitative data there is quite a great deal to do in terms of the field notes (and in this instance online discussion) or interview scripts that need to be critically looked at as well as synthesised. Most of the analysis occurs during and after data collecting. For this research, however, the data was analysed and discussed according to the themes that emanated from questions arising from the interviews, group discussions and the literature from previous chapters. What I was planning to do was to echo the participants' views and experiences based on the genre as well as the selected South African novels for those who participated in this aspect of the study. But underpinning all of the factors that went into the interpretation and discussion of data was the objectives and key questions as indicated in Chapter One of the research study. These are revisited in the table below:

OBJECTIVES	QUESTIONS
❖ To determine what draws students to crime fiction novels. ❖ To establish the ways in which students engage with this genre as a literary practice. ❖ To put to the test whether a selection of South African crime fiction novels live up to the expectations of the participants' reasons of what draws them to the genre. ❖ To evaluate whether a virtual book club is a forum that enables or limits crime fiction readers to engage with other readers – this is to determine whether a social network such as Facebook could be used as virtual space to have book discussions about crime fiction.	❖ What draws students to crime fiction novels? ❖ How do students engage with crime fiction novels? ❖ Do South African crime novels live up to the participants expectations to what draws them to the genre? ❖ How (if at all) does using Facebook as a social network enable readers of crime fiction to engage with fellow readers about crime fiction?

4.4 Ethical Considerations

For the validity of this research and any other research, it was imperative to assure participants of the following:

- That confidentiality was guaranteed;
- That all participants would be given pseudonyms;
- That participation was entirely voluntarily and a participant could withdraw from the study at any time; and
- The nature of the research.

All of these had to be articulated in a letter addressed to the participants and permission had to be obtained from the university's Ethics Committee (see appendices).

CHAPTER 5: DATA REPRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

The previous chapter explained how I intended to gather data for this research study. In the discussion, I highlighted that the methodology to be used in gathering data was the qualitative methodology. Two instruments, namely a virtual book club and interviewing, were the ways in which the data was collected from the participants. To reiterate on the composition of the participants, these were undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of the Witwatersrand who represented nearly every racial group in South Africa. Between the two instruments, there is a representation of males and females, and the youngest of these was a 20 year old while the oldest was a 39 year old. In total six participants were interviewed and 12 (excluding myself) participants' views are in the virtual book club data. It must be noted that from the six interviewees, only two were not part of the virtual book club.

All the participants have been given pseudonyms in both the interviews and the virtual book club. I have provided brief background information on each participant:

(i) John: 23-year-old black male reading towards a BEd degree
(ii) Lindy: 21-year-old white female reading towards a BEd degree
(iii) Vlad: 20-year-old black male reading towards a LLB degree
(iv) Sally: 21-year-old black female reading towards a BA in Anthropology and Psychology degree
(v) Lynne: 22-year-old black female reading towards a BSc Construction Studies Programme degree
(vi) Tony: 24-year-old black male reading towards MA in AELS (Applied English Language Studies) degree
(vii) Jen: 39-year-old white female reading towards MA in AELS (Applied English Language Studies) degree
(viii) Thembi: 22-year-old black female reading towards a BA in International Relations, Politics and Media degree
(ix) Sam: 29-year-old black female reading towards a BEd degree
(x) Dave: 28-year-old coloured male reading towards a BA Hons in Politics degree
(xi) Matthew: 30-year-old black male reading towards a BEd degree
(xii) Jasmyne: 22-year-old white female reading towards a BEd degree
(xiii) Alan: 25-year-old white male reading towards a Hons in Education degree
(xiv) Leanne: 21-year-old white female reading towards a BEd degree

This chapter discusses the two instruments independently. But it so happens that there are similarities in opinions and experiences between the two sets of data. I should concede too, just as I did in the previous chapter, that because of the participant's lack of theoretical understanding of the issues, I did prompt responses by asking what may be perceived as leading questions. This is more apparent in the interview transcripts (which are appended at the end of this research study). In the virtual book club, I participated in the discussions by not just asking questions, but I also shared my experiences. But with this admission, I do have to state too, that I got the distinct impression that the participants were independent enough to form and give their own opinions. When probed, some of these opinions did at times shift subtly with the participants showing that they were giving thought to the questions.

In terms of layout, the data is generally represented in tables, and where this is not possible, the data is discussed so as to give a holistic picture of the issues under review. There is also commentary for the data represented in tables. But, as will be noted, these tables merely provide background information and emerging patterns that are not extensive but which are interesting nonetheless. What is of importance in this chapter, prior to accounting for the emerging pattern/s, is to understand that much of the interpretation is done in the attempt to answer the key questions raised (in conjunction with the objectives) in Chapters One and Four.

5.1 Virtual Book Club Data

The underlying principle of this research study is that the literature in question, namely the reading of crime novels, is done for enjoyment. In establishing a virtual book club, I, as the researcher, had to strike a balance between discussing contemporary issues about crime fiction and ensuring that the students (or participants) still found the exercise enjoyable. For this reason, one will note that the language and tone in the group discussions is colloquial with intermittent insights that speak to the fact that these are members of a higher learning institution. For the purpose of this chapter, I did, however, edit the spelling of some of the comments. To avoid bogging down the students with heavy conversation I chose the topics mentioned below for discussions. These topics address, to an extent, issues found in the literature reviewed in this research study.

The weekly topics were provided every week in the middle of the week. My thinking was that the participants could make use of weekends too to participate in the group. Each new

topic was introduced after a period of seven days. I would inform the participants of any developments (including every topic) via the messaging service on the website as well as other social network forums. At the end of my data collecting period I informed the participants that I had reached the end of my data collecting and I thanked them for their participation. All official group proceedings were terminated after I had made a copy of the topics and comments that are found in this chapter as well as appendices at the end of the research study.

In the journal that I kept specifically for this data exercise, I noted a participant that confessed that she felt that the conversations were intimidating. I did succeed in allaying her fears because, after talking to her she began participating in the virtual book club. Her view was that she did not have much insight and that the rest of the members appear to be "serious" readers. Another member confessed the same to another group member. Barring those two exceptions, participants felt free enough to express their views although academic commitments restricted their time spent on the group page. As a result, not every member commented on each and every topic and fewer had anything to say about the extras on the group. The extras, as mentioned in the previous chapter, were the additional interviews with authors, websites as well as book extracts that they could view. These were primarily there to prompt members to participate as much as possible by keeping them interested while waiting for the following weekly topic.

In addressing the topics to be discussed, it must be stated that the most pertinent and focal sub-questions that needed to be discussed were:

(a) How does a Facebook group enable (if at all) students to discuss crime fiction?

Tied with this question is not just whether the virtual space provides that platform, but whether students are independent enough and/or interested enough to organise themselves into a social group to discuss a common interest in literature without the benefits of academic credits. Furthermore, does this sample group give credence to the conclusion drawn from my Honours research project in which it is claimed that students do have literary practices?

(b) What draws students to the genre? Together with that question is the question of how the students engage with the genre.

Supplementing these questions is the attempt to extrapolate the reasons why the students engage with crime fiction. In addition, what positions do they hold or are they are placed in when engaging with the genre.

5.1.1 Group Discussions

In this section, I sought to provide the topic as it appeared in the virtual book club and thereafter comment on the members' input. I have categorized the discussions according to respondents (so that one gets an idea of how many participants commented). Other terms found within the tables will be elaborated on after presenting the topic and table of data. Statements found within the topics should not be misconstrued to be reference to other sections of the research study (unless otherwise stated) as the topics are merely presented as they were in the group.

5.1.1.1 INTRODUCTION TO GROUP

The purpose of this topic was to introduce the participants to the group by having them share anecdotes of their first engagement with a crime novel. It was also to have a feel for the types of subgenres they were reading as well as their level of experience as crime readers. To establish this, I posted the following topic in italics.

Crime fiction is said to be quite popular in South Africa with approximately 40 authors' books falling under the genre. If that's the case 'we', as members of this group, are amongst the many people that enjoy reading crime fiction in this country.
I can remember how I was introduced to crime fiction. It was by chance that I stumbled across a book that was written by Robert Crais (an American author) who now has become one of my favourite authors. I had been a reader of fantasy novels (a genre that I now do not fancy) and the title of the book Voodoo River was read to me at a library and thinking that it was about black magic I took it. Of course it wasn't the case for the novel was about crime and from then onwards it is crime that I preferred engaging in.
Can you share with us how you were introduced to crime fiction?

This topic served as an icebreaker, but once the responses came trickling in, it also gave a sense of how or what or whom influenced the participants when they were initially introduced into the genre. Intrinsic, thereby suggests that a participant was drawn to the genre because he/she took an independent decision with a high level of agency. It took mere exposure to the genre (an environment with books for instance) and the willingness to read

for him/her to engage with crime fiction. Extrinsic suggests that a participant was prompted more by external factors to explore the genre. There may have not been a keen interest to read but as a result of an educational task or encouragement of an educator and/or friend and/or family member, the participant was persuaded into trying a book. This of course led to him/her becoming attracted to the genre.

RESPONDENTS	INTRINSIC FACTORS	EXTRINSIC FACTORS
8/12	2	6

As noted in the table, six of the participants' introduction to the genre was due to extrinsic factors while two were captivated by intrinsic factors. The influences for the intrinsic factors were best captured by one of the respondents, John, who acknowledged that he was referred to a pile of books by his English lecturer. Though this may be seen as an extrinsic factor, John's high agency is illustrated in him stating that he was "frustrated by the fact that [he] was not reading as much as [he] should." In this statement, John was making an important point in that he does not read a great deal (though it cannot be measured what a great deal or "not much" reading really is). But from this it can be inferred that he does like reading. The intrinsic factor was further proven when John said that the additional reading he wanted to do was for the winter holidays. After the lecturer directed him to a desk with a pile of books, John admitted to "(scanning) a few, but only one caught [his] eye." In other words, he made an independent decision on what he wanted to read based on what books he saw on the desk. This is an aspect that emanates in Pachtman and Wilson (2006) who hold that students have the "autonomy" to select a book of their preference.

Much of the responses pertaining to the extrinsic factors highlight some of the claims made in my Honours research project that students will be prompted by lecturers, acquaintances, friends and family to start reading (Ncala, 2012). Lindy was a typical example of this for in her recount of how she was introduced to the genre she said:

> I first encountered crime fiction in high school when I had to write a book review for English. When I was young I wasn't very interested with reading and so I had to ask my mother if I could borrow a book from her ... Deciding which precious book out of her 'library' she would lend me probably took longer than actually reading the book. Eventually she decided on *Hide and Seek*, a James Patterson novel.

Lindy's extrinsic factors were found in the fact that she was obliged to engage in an educational task and it was her mother who gave her a book to read. She did not have the autonomy to find a book of her own liking and it so happened by chance that her mother gave her a crime novel which subsequently ensured that she remained interested in not just the genre but reading too. A similar argument can be made for a participant such as Dave who admitted to being a person that "hated reading". After Dave discussed a movie that he had watched with a friend, it was then, on his friend's strong recommendation, that Dave started reading.

5.1.1.2 (two topics analysed and discussed jointly)

The reason these topics are being discussed jointly is because, in these topics, I wanted to establish what kind of characters appealed to the members. I was also trying to establish whether the participants related to characters (if at all). In reading the comments of both topics, I paid attention to the manner in which the participants expressed their views. In other words, did they express an interest in a character along racial or gender lines or were there other reasons why they could/could not relate to characters. Every statement within the topics should be viewed within the context of group discussions. For example, "in previous discussions" relates to discussions that occurred in the group.

DESCRIPTION OF FAVOURITE CHARACTER: *Don't you just love reading a book that gets you so involved that you think of the characters as real persons even though you know that they are nothing but fiction… I often used to ponder and talk to friends about some characters that would grab my attention to such a point that I would even wish that they are out there somewhere… Dare I say, I would even feature some of these characters in my dreams…lol. I don't think that it is a phenomenon that is exclusive to kids, we too, as adults have favourite characters. In my case, there are two… I refer to them as the dynamic duo – Elvis Cole and Joe Pike – who are characters by Robert Crais. I admire the friendship that exists between these two for the simple reason because it is pure and true. When people talk about putting your all into it, no one demonstrates it better for me than Elvis and Joe. So I ask you folks… Who is/are your favourite character/s? Please share with us details of the person/s and why you admire him/her/them?*
NB: These need not be heroes for villains also tend to be captivating for some people.

RELATING TO CHARACTERS: In previous discussions a number of views raised touched on how (if at all) authors write about societal issues. When addressed in novels, these societal

issues resonate through characters' lives and as much as it is being said that crime fiction is plot driven, because of the social issues, we need to acknowledge too that the characters play an intricate role in the novels we read. But now, what needs to be looked at is how authors portray these characters. Do you as a reader relate in any way to the manner in which females and/or males are being depicted? Are these individuals a figment of our imaginations or do we actually interact with such individuals and/or do we encounter real life stories of these characters? Think of that extraordinary hero and that cunning villain as well as those characters that play a support role in crime fiction, and share with us whether you think authors are on key or are they way off.

NB. Please take into consideration the following aspects: physical (includes socio-economic status), emotional, mental, spiritual, intelligence, intellect, etc.

The participants who commented on these topics depicted an interesting picture with regard to the categories that I had chosen to discuss their comments in. Those categorised under the "personality traits" were the participants who acknowledged that their favourite characters have personalities that draw readers to them. The participants categorised under the "personality-race and gender" traits were the participants that mentioned race and/or gender in their comments. What can be read into their responses is that they appreciated these factors alongside the characteristics of any character found in a crime novel.

RESPONDENTS	PERSONALITY TRAITS	PERSONALITY-RACE AND GENDER TRAITS
8/12	2	6

Thembi, for instance, was a strong candidate for the section in which this research study looked at the role of women (and more specifically black women) within the genre. She was also one of the participants whom I would argue falls under the personality-race and gender traits group. When looking at her sentiments of why she is fascinated by a character in James Patterson's and Maxine Paetro's (a female co-author)*First To Die,* it is learnt that Thembi admires and has an "intimate bond of identification" (Walton and Jones, 1999: 127-128) for a black female pathologist. In talking about how she feels about the character Thembi says: "I do acknowledge the fact that I might like her because she's black and unconsciously felt I could relate to her better than all the other women."

The character that Thembi was referring to is Claire Washburn who is a prominent character of the Women's Murder Club Series written by the two authors. As part of a group of four women that have an interest in law enforcement, Washburn plays a key role in resolving crimes with her friends, a policewoman, prosecutor and journalist whom are all women. She often gives intellectual insights as the medical examiner to cases that the women discuss and investigate from time to time.

For Thembi it was important for women to be depicted as strong and independent. Being a black female, this female character highlights the characteristics that she wanted in a character or characters when reading crime novels. Walton and Jones (1999) speak to the fact that female characters in the female hard-boiled genre were professionalised and made independent during the 1980s. This does come through in Thembi's statement when she said that "I always like female characters who are portrayed as powerful and independent." When reverting back to how her favourite character illustrates this, she said that "Claire's vulnerabilities were never shown in the book" as may be found in the male hard-boiled genre. Thembi's views were testimony to Pahl and Rowsell's (2005) and Street's (cited in Hamilton: 2000) beliefs that in thinking of literacy as a social practice we should note too that readers' ideologies go a long way in shaping their thinking about texts. Furthermore, readers also "infuse" their identities into the reading experience just as in Thembi's case. As a black female, Thembi believed that these attributes were important in her reading of crime fiction.

Concurring with Thembi's views, though it is not elaborated on, Jasmyne too said that she "relates emotionally" to women characters and for her "it certainly makes it a lot more interesting to read and understand" novels within the genre.

The other statements that illustrated these phenomena were different, as participants such as Matthew and Dave referred to characters as "my man" or "my men" which are phrases that suggest a propensity to lean towards masculinist ideas. When Matthew used such a phrase, he did so to express his appreciation for a villain found in James Patterson's *Along Came A Spide*r or *Cat and Mouse* which are all part of the author's Alex Cross's series. Matthew commended the manner in which the villain operates when he stated that Gary Soneji "walks the walk without going around and telling everyone how well he can commit a perfect crime and get away with it…the way he thinks gets my mind working and attempting hard to figure out what his next move is going to be."

In the same vein, Matthew added that "this is one character that can do both, he can excite you and sadden you almost every time", which was presumably a reference to the crimes that Soneji commits. In this, Matthew has illustrated that he has derived additional meaning from the novel that he read. This meaning of "excitement and sadness" emanated from his ideologies of crime and its effects (Street, cited in Hamilton, 2000).

Meanwhile, Dave's appreciation for two men related more to their physical abilities for Joe Pike and Elvis Cole, who are characters in several novels written by Robert Crais (*The Watchman* and *The First Rule),* to mention a couple, often have to resort to violence when they are trouble. Pike is often the one who will be the protector or "the heavy". This is why Dave said that "I wish I could find someone like that who could be my bodyguard." But the personality traits in both Matthew and Dave's perspectives became apparent when they made statements such as "he thinks like the villain that he is" and "Joe does not say much; I like that because I also don't speak that much" respectively.

The rest of the participants that can also be classified under this category are inclined to be more balanced about which characters they liked. Their balance is seen in their confession that they like both male and female characters though they conceded to leaning towards the one more than the other. Lindy for instance stated that she "[loved] reading novels that have strong female characters in, and [she felt] that it is a reflection of society and how it changes, but [she did] also love reading novels that have strong male leads too."

I assume that Lindy was adopting the perspective held by Walton and Jones (1999) who state that women were occupying positions in professions that were considered to be for males as early as the 1960s. When talking about Lucy, a character created by Patricia Cornwell in the Kay Scarpetta series, which includes titles such as *Postmortem* and *Body of Evidence*, and more recently *The Bone Bed* and *Dust*, Sally added to Lindy's views and she said

> I absolutely love Lucy as well...for me the fact that she is so obviously fictional is more of an advantage for the reader (especially if you're a female),she is relatable in the sense that she is the chick every girl wishes they were: amazingly beautiful, super smart and highly driven...

But in attributing her student interests in psychology to what character she liked, Sally stated that

> For me the best fictional character ever has to be Hannibal Lector (I have never read about anyone that comes even close)...he is highly intelligent, psychopathic but still retains somewhat of a vulnerable streak (you can't help feeling sorry for him given his traumatic childhood) and he is just very unpredictable and perceptive...as a psychology student those are the character traits that intrigue me the most.

The other participants that fell under the personality-genre traits group used pronouns such as she and he. Their emphasis was not in explicitly giving an account that discriminates, either positively or negatively, by using markers such as gender and race. These individuals were taken by the sheer brilliance of the characters and perhaps the manner in which the author wrote about these characters. In Vlad's account of his favourite character, one notes the following about The Ghost, a character from *Kill Me If You Can,* written by James Patterson,

> He is a Master of deception in his infamous career as an assassin and I admire his sense of humour…he gives me the impression he takes his job as an assassin like a joke but this is not the case as James Patterson illustrates him as a very efficient killer.

While John appreciated Harry Bosch, who is a Los Angeles Police Department detective in novels such as *The Black Echo*, *The Black Ice* and *The Drop* (to mention but a few), which are written by Michael Connelly, as a character that is hard working and "honourable", as John put it, "he leaves no stone unturned…and I like the fact that he doesn't rest until a case is solved [and] finally he favours no one, to him everyone deserves a share of dignity."

When John was pushed in the RELATING TO CHARACTERS topic to indicate how and what type of characters he related to, he still resisted using markers such as race and gender, instead, in is affirmation he stated,

> I must say that the authors of crime fiction are excellent (those I have read). Most of their characters are not superfluous, they are still connected to reality and I think that this is the reason why most of us (readers) tend to be attached to them; especially the lead characters.

These participants' views placed them under the personality traits as they described the intrinsic aspects of these characters in great detail. Phrases such as "efficient killer", "leaves no stone unturned" and "highly intelligent" illustrated that the participants were drawn to the characters because of the characters' abilities as villains or heroes. This was slightly different from the initial respondents who mentioned race and/or gender traits in their attraction to

characters. Adding to that the participants brought into their reading practice ideas that stemmed from their worlds (a notion discussed extensively in Chapter Two in the section about critical literacy)

5.1.1.3 REALISM VERSUS SENSATIONALISM

Within this topic I was trying to establish whether the participants thought that authors were being realistic in their depictions of crime. Furthermore, was this something that they were comfortable with (or not) as readers. The topic below is in italics.

CRAZY-INSANE or just simply CREATIVE? We all read crime fiction for a number of reasons (an aspect that we undoubtedly will continue to discuss in our group). But in so many discussions that I have had about the nature of crime novels there still remains a lot that is not accounted for. When reading how descriptive some of these authors tend to be one has to wonder whether they are reflecting our deepest thoughts or that they are merely using their imaginations creatively. Do authors try to paint a realistic picture to the reader by placing the reader in the scene of the crime? Or are authors just making an attempt to be as vile, disturbing and sensationalist as possible? Please share with us your opinion on whether you think authors of crime fiction are CREATIVE or CRAZY. Give us an anecdotal account of a scene or novel that you have read in which you thought that the author was being genius or disgusting in relation to the main question above.

This topic is not represented in a table as all the views of eight of the twelve participants, who made comments on the topic, agreed with the idea that authors tend to be gruesome in their depictions of particular scenes. The consistency did not end there, as the participants also agreed that this device was much needed for it kept them interested as it was an aspect of reality. But as one will note, there were concessions that speak to the fact that this device tended to be disturbing at times.

Thembi, who had a recollection of reading a gruesome scene in high school, claimed that because of this particular book in which an "author was very descriptive with a particular injury scene… [she] understood there and then that [she] could never be a doctor." But in her own acknowledgement of the necessity of such detail, she argued that authors need to pursue this line of writing as it does not only have to be realistic but "what they write and how they write, needs to relate to the reader."

Lindy concurred with Thembi's claims and in her explanation she stated that "a lot of authors draw on ideas from things that have happened in reality." Based on this premise she asked, "who are the crazy ones, the authors or the ones that actually do psychotic things to actual people and not fictional characters?" Lindy's question became even more relevant when Dave expressed his fears (or rather horrors I would say) of an Alex Cross novel (a series by James Patterson) book that he read in which a child's body was discovered. This led to him reflecting on what atrocities were occurring in society.

Hence, such views suggest, though implicitly, that the depictions are necessary for the participants as these made them relate to the stories for these crimes are a reflection of what they see and hear in their societies.

5.1.1.4 **SUPPLEMENTARY DATA** (Member's (Alan) Question)

As the virtual book club was an open forum that encouraged the members to ask questions and for members to engage with each other, one of the members used this opportunity. His post, which is rather self-explanatory, indicates that he is new to the genre and he wanted to enquire to the fanatics, what they found so appealing about the genre.

Hey everybody, I have quite a few friends who are passionate about Crime Fiction. I am keen to know more about the genre and perhaps get into it in the future? Won't you guys tell me what it is about this genre that fascinates you? I'm curious and interested. Enlighten me folks.

Much of the theory covered broadly in Chapter Three indicates that in certain periods of history the crime fiction genre focused on different issues. For a long time now the consensus has been that the genre brings to the fore the notion of restoration or a satisfactory conclusion to a crime. This is what ultimately draws readers to the genre (Naidu, 2013; Warnes, 2012; Cloete and Andersson, 2006). The six virtual book club members who gave a comment on Alan's post did not explicitly state this but for one. Lindy was the only member whose comment highlighted this after a question from Alan in which he asked whether crime fiction was the same as horror or thriller films. As she said in her response,

> There is a difference, in horrors and thrillers no one really solves much and just gets killed…in these novels it is the process that the crime solvers go through to get the killer, but it does have aspects that horrors and thrillers use.

Lindy's use of the word "solve" indicates that she was aware that solutions are key to enjoying crime novels. Another member whom it can be argued shared similar views was Jasmyne, and although she did not make use of the word "solve", she agreed and confirmed that she not only likes the mystery, but that "there is something to figure out".

The rest of the comments straddled aspects of the genre that informed one of the various subgenres that are found within crime fiction. Leanne's use of the phrase "pure thrill" is one such example as this indicated that she "enjoyed" thriller novels. Tony said that he "[liked] crime scenes, and treachery, embezzlement and mystery." From this it can be deduced that he either "enjoys" the police-procedural genre or the hard-boiled detective genre. None of these statements, from either Tony or Leanne as well as the other participants who made similar remarks, speak to the core aspect of the genre or subgenres that it is assumed they have a pleasure reading. This is the idea that there is a resolution to a crime or crimes at the end of a crime novel, and/or a mystery is revealed.

5.1.2 Summary and Conclusion on Virtual Book Club

After looking at the data gathered from the virtual book club, there is a valid argument to be made that a Facebook group does enable students from the University of the Witwatersrand to have discussions pertaining to crime fiction. Adding to that, there is evidence to suggest that the students had the responsibility to follow-up on their commitment to be participants as this was a voluntary exercise. As Bowers-Campell (2011) claims too that more members have the opportunity to give input, this too is evident in the virtual book club as the twelve members who participated commented at some point in time on the chosen topics.

The data in this section also supported the findings in my Honours research study that students do have literary practices. As Chisholm (cited in Ncala, 2012) intimated, this is a diverse group of students in a number of academic fields. The virtual book club, for instance, had participants from various fields in Humanities, the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management as well as the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment. But as noted, there were several reasons to what drew these students to the genre of crime fiction and also how they engaged with the genre as a literary practice. Most of the participants gave accounts of being "thrilled", "fascinated "excited" by the genre as reasons for their attraction. Meanwhile, at least two respondents did say that they were drawn by the resolution factor.

Lastly, how some of the participants indicated their appreciation for characters by emphasising racial and gender traits, showed how the genre positions them. This is an aspect that can be attributed to Luke and Freebody (1997) who argue, as seen in Chapter Two, that within literacy a reader is positioned in some way as all texts are not neutral and thus "construct" as well as "refract and bend" ideas of the "social and natural worlds."

5.2 Interview Data

In this section of the chapter, I turn my attention to the interviews I conducted with six participants who agreed to read one of the two South African novels chosen for the research study. As mentioned, four of the six participants stem from the virtual book club. I divided the discussion of the interviews into two parts. The first of these handled the general discussion points pertaining to the genre of crime fiction. The second component was geared towards addressing matters relating to, or emanating from, the two novels, namely Deon Meyer's *Blood Safari* and Roger Smith's *Mixed Blood.* The component pertaining to the South African novels added new insights and honed in on the finer details of the genre with specific focus on characters, scenes and approaches taken by the authors. For this reason, the key question in this section was: Do the South African novels live up to the interviewees' expectations as to what draws them to the genre?

5.2.1 Participants: Views on Crime Fiction

What will be noted in this section is that I question readers about their background in as far as when they started reading crime fiction, who or what influenced them, whether they preferred local or international novels, and whether they looked for social issues in the novels. This is the data that I will now discuss by recording the main questions asked and the participants responses. After each question, I summarise the findings. There are two instances when this will not be the case. The first of these is for questions 5.2.1.1 and 5.2.1.2. These questions I discuss jointly due to the information being related. Furthermore, the information also contextualises the period and space in which the participants became readers of crime novels. The second set of questions to be discussed jointly are 5.2.1.3 and 5.2.1.4. These questions speak to what novels the participants read in the genre. They also talk about the participants' thoughts and emotions when reading these novels.

All the responses in this section pertain only to the key questions. When I found it difficult to insert responses, I have summed up the participants' responses in brackets. To read

questions, subquestions and full responses, the interview transcripts are appended at the end of this research study.

5.2.1.1 How long have you been a reader of crime fiction novels?

John: I think it's been two years now.

Sally: I started when I was about twelve.

Dave: For about three years now.

Thembi: A few months.

Sam: I think this is the third year now.

Jen: Look I'm 39 now. I've been reading for most of my life. One of the earliest ones that I can remember is Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys.

5.2.1.2 Who or what made you to read crime fiction?

John: I bumped into a crime fiction book by accident when I was looking for books to read through the summer vacation. I didn't know at first that it was a crime fiction book I just picked it up and then I read the review and I found it interesting and I took it with. As soon as I started reading it that's when I discovered that it's crime fiction and ever since then, I've been reading.

Sally: My grandmother.

Dave: A good friend of mine introduced me to some book that I watched a movie of *The Lincoln* by Michael Connelly.

Thembi: You suggested it to me, so I started then.

[Thembi was referring to me as the researcher]

Sam: The course that I am doing, Education, we have the New Literacy course and they encouraged us to read. Firstly, I just read because they wanted us to read and we had assignments and then I got interested in this.

Jen: My mother's preferred genre was thrillers and crime novels. I started leaning more towards crime fiction when I was in high school. One of the earlier ones that I can remember

reading is the *Dead Zone* by Stephen King.

The first of these questions showed that four of the six participants were relatively new to the genre. Only Sally and Jen have been reading crime novels for a period of a decade or longer. The second question confirmed Sally's and Jen's long history by informing us that reading crime fiction was a practice stemming from childhood. Their home environment was the reason for them becoming readers of the genre. This was different from the other four readers. At least three of them gave responses that showed that their university experience led to them discovering the genre. One of these experiences included being a participant in this research study as I was the person who had introduced the person to the genre. Sam attributed a first-year course for her becoming a reader. Meanwhile, Dave's response merely showed that he only got to know about the genre in recent years and this was because of his friend.

5.2.1.3 Can you remember the first crime novel you read?

John: Yes, I read a novel titled *Nine Dragons* by Michael Connelly.

Sally: It was either Mary Higgins-Clark or Agatha Christie. One of them because those are my first crime books and after that I read everything that they had written.

Dave read *The Lincoln Lawyer* by Michael Connelly.

Thembi: *It was First to Die* by James Patterson.

Sam read *The Reversal* by Michael Connelly.

Jen read *The Dead Zone* by Steven King.

5.2.1.4 How did you feel about it? Describe your thoughts and emotions.

John: While reading it I was very interested because it was a completely different kind of genre to me. It involved guns and police and stuff like that. So, I fell in love with the book five pages into the book because it seems like every page I turned revealed a certain mystery about the story that was beginning. So, it felt very interesting and it was quite a page turner. So, ever since the first five pages to the end of the book, it was just adrenalin all the way.

Sally: I understood the words but I didn't understand the concepts. When I read them now I understand what's happening then, I read them and I was kind a like 'okay'. Here and there

you could tell what was happening, so it was basically just patch work. It was exciting. It was immersing yourself in a book and you would feel what the characters are feeling. Your emotions go as they go. When someone gets killed, it's shock, when they catch the killer, its happiness.

Dave: In the beginning I was quite hesitant because I didn't know what to expect but as the book went on I got so hooked to it that I couldn't get enough and I just wanted more. When I finished it I wanted the next book and the next book. It happened to most crime fiction books that I read. Because I watched the movie first, I found the book to have more detail and much broader and more interesting. It made me excited. It was a very thrilling experience.

Thembi: I liked it a lot. I got hooked I guess. I felt like I want more. While reading the book I just wanted to know what was gonna happen next and at the end of the book I felt like it was a little incomplete.

Sam: You know, when I was reading at that time I didn't have a computer, I was reading at the computer lab –it's far from res. So when I was reading I would get scared, I would imagine things happening there, I just thought I would be going through the dark. It was a nice experience because I got addicted. I would read a book in three to four days not sleeping and sometimes I would forget my assignments.

Jen: I was utterly gripped, in most crime novels you have a mystery to be solved by the good people who have to be cleverer than the bad people.

All of the participants were exposed to an international crime novel for their first experiences with crime fiction. What is interesting though is that only some of the respondents made reference to the satisfactory ending aspect to these novels as initial thoughts and emotions. Sally spoke about this when she referred to what she experienced when someone is caught or when someone is murdered. Jen too talked about this when she said that the point about most crime novels was for the investigators to be smarter than the rest. This led to the resolution of a crime. But there was consensus amongst the respondents about being enthralled by the genre when they first encountered it. They all admitted to being "gripped", "interested", "thrilled" etc. which thus led to them becoming addicted to the genre.

5.2.1.5 Do you prefer reading local and/or international crime fiction novels? Why?

John: Well, I would say the answer to this question links to the first question before. Because the first author that I was introduced to was international, (meaning he was American), so, I feel more comfortable reading American authors than local authors. I think for local authors I've only read one.

Sally: Definitely international. Those are the ones I grew up with. I'm used to the writing style and discovering faraway places. Not local because I feel like I walk through that every day so why would I have to read a book about it?

Dave: Look, I had my first experience a couple of weeks back with local content but I am used to the American genre.

[After admitting that he preferred international novels, Dave further said that he thought that it was because of the marketing of international novels as opposed to locally-written crime fiction novels.]

Thembi: I think local because I can relate more to it.

Sam: I don't know. It was the first time reading a South African novel. This South African one was more exciting because the places they were talking about were familiar and the history.

Jen: I don't really discriminate as far as that goes. Obviously with the local ones it's slightly more tricky because there not that many of them. What tends to happen with me is that when I like an author I will read everything that author has ever written. Deon Meyer I have read almost every single of his books. Now that I have a kindle I am starting to collect books by authors. The greater number of books per author that I have, Steven King and Ed McBane.

[Jen also said that marketing had a role to play in her reading more international novels.]

Most of the participants admitted to enjoying international crime novels more. The reasons for this varied, but there was more to this being the first novel to which they were being exposed. What is seen in some of the respondents' answers is that they wanted to learn about different geographical settings. Thembi and Samare were the only ones who were comfortable with reading a novel that spoke about familiar territory. What I think is rather more significant were the responses that stated that marketing strategies favour international

novels more than the local ones. According to the participants, in both book stores and libraries the international genre took precedence over the local content. Why I think that is important is because the genre is becoming a point of interest for many readers in this country (Naidu, 2013). Book stores and libraries should be using that as an opportunity to promote literature that is presumably more relevant to local readers' lives.

5.2.1.6 Would you say that you enjoy crime fiction?

John: Yes I do. I do enjoy crime fiction. I have to say that prior to crime fiction I used to read biographies and things like that. Ever since reading crime fiction, I've discovered that this is more interesting. It's not about the dead bodies. For me it's on the investigation process, how the character comes to the conclusion of a case and how he collects facts and information. The question process. I feel as though I am part of that process.

Sally: Yes, very much so. I enjoy crime fiction because there's the thrill. When you reading a book you wanna be in the moment with it and you wanna feel the same emotions that the author was feeling at the time or what they want you to feel. So I like that. And I like the fact that it is sort of like a puzzle. Here and there is a red herring that moves you the other way but down the line you feel like it's not this guy. So it's like a constant puzzle which engages your mind.

[Sally was also adamant that she was drawn by the gruesomeness found in some of the novels in subsequent questions. But she did eventually say that she enjoyed resolutions too.]

Dave: It's more the way it unravels type of thing. Someone did something and people are after them and at the end the good always win but then, there's always something in his own personal life that is affected by the choices he made.

[Dave gave this response after stating that he loved crime fiction.]

Thembi: Yes I do. Maybe because I enjoy action movies in general, so I enjoy them too. But what I love about them is that they also have an aspect of reality in them.

[After being asked if the resolution to a crime could also be the reason she liked crime novels, Thembi agreed.]

Sam enjoyed crime novels too. She mostly enjoyed the action because it 'moves her emotions'. But when questioned as to what she truly enjoyed about crime novels, she eventually said that she liked the satisfactory endings.

Jen: Oh, yes! It's my go to genre. I think it's more about the mystery. It's about who did it, and are they going to get caught. Maybe it's as easy as good guy after bad guy and that satisfying thing where good usually triumphs.

When this question was initially asked to the respondents, there was no immediate answer relating to the resolution aspect. For most of the respondents, it took a series of follow-up questions for them to realise that they were drawn to the genre because of satisfactory endings. Though Sally eventually said that the satisfactory ending was a factor, she still maintained that the gruesome crimes was what appealed more to her. While Sam and Thembi talked about their love for action, John, Dave and Jen were the respondents that referred to the idea that a mystery needs to get resolved in crime novels and that is why they enjoy them.

5.2.1.7 Do you think that crime novels give you as a reader a good idea of present day issues?

John: Yes, I would say. It deals with not only crime but also looks at the state of people's thinking and law enforcement structures and how they operate presently and how that operation serves the purpose of the structure. Yah, issues such as drugs, poverty, crime.

Sally: Yes and no, I think it depends where you're from. There is a general theme of crime in it, but from a South African point of view you could say that is nothing new or it happens in a different way. So it does give you everyday type of issues but you have a different local understanding to it.

Dave: It does. It reflects on how society is in terms of women politics and how women are depicted in society and how children are depicted –how children are vulnerable.

Thembi: I think it will depend like I said I relate more to local ones than I do to international ones. So, local ones yes. I feel like its bringing an aspect of reality, but the international ones I feel like they more fictional.

Sam: It does, especially the one I read now. In the one I read I didn't know there were white people who didn't want to participate in apartheid. And these land fightings.

Jen: Yes, and no. If I think about [*Blood Safari* by Deon Meyer] I think that it brought up a whole lot of stuff that is incredibly South African and very pertinent, and I think that not a whole lot of people have talked about. Things like identity and languages, or things like friendship between black and white. If I think about (Ed McBane) there was a definitely a progression. So I think it reflects what is happening in the broader environment, like criminal issues and concerns.

All of the participants agreed that crime fiction did give its readership an idea of present-day issues. These issues include drugs, abuse, corruption, and various relationships among races. The participants who specifically talked about the South African genre in their responses said that those novels highlighted present-day issues relevant to the country. What some of the participants thought was that the genre did not highlight present-day issues related to their circumstances, such as when a story is specifically located in a different city or country. The participants' views were that there were issues relevant to only that community in which the novel is situated. These responses give some credence to Gee's (1986) notion of literacy being a 'discourse practice'. In essence, Gee holds that readers' reading practices or discourse practices are tied in with the readers' worlds. Hence, the participants were able to discriminate among locations and issues that they believe are found within those environments.

5.2.1.8 Are there any issues that stand out for you or that you are hoping an author will write about, or is it all about entertainment?

John: I wouldn't say there are any at the moment. For now I feel as though I am just familiarising myself with the genre and I can say that mostly it is all about entertainment at the moment.

Sally: Quite a few authors have written about the role of women in the police or serials because you never find a woman serial killer. It's always the black widow where she lost it or it was a crime of passion. You get them now but generally there is still a lack. It is very male dominated. It is a very male sort of thing, but when you find a woman that is strong as a woman you relate to that and it is sort of empowering.

[Sally said too that she did not necessarily think about the issues. She generally read for entertainment purposes.)

Dave: I think it goes a bit beyond entertainment. If you look at how kids are being raped today –in the news 18-6 month old babies being raped – what does that say about society. Those things should actually be looked at in these books.

Thembi: Yes I think so. Modern day corruption because the one I read was about corruption during the apartheid years. I feel like a novel based on current ANC corruption. I think it makes better sense and I understand better when it is pointing to issues that I'm aware of as much as it is entertaining at the same time.

Sam: Entertainment.

Jen: I think that crime fiction has a very fine line that it needs to walk between being too socially conscious, and being pure entertainment. Because you don't really want to pick up a crime novel that is dealing with deep issues. Because sometimes you just want to pick up a book with a little bit of fluff to read for entertainment purposes. I don't know to be honest with you.

Most of the participants explained that their engagement with the genre was for entertainment purposes. There were, however, those who believed that the genre did more or that it needed to strike a balance between social commentary and entertainment. Thembi was one of those participants who claimed that when a novel brings out social issues, it made it better for her to relate to. Sam, John and Sally's responses showed that they read the genre solely for entertainment. For John this was because he was still getting familiar with the genre. But just like Jen, the genre remained a form of escapism. Though Sally read for the entertainment, she admitted to wanting content that portrayed women differently. She was not in favour of novels that portrayed women as submissive and weak.

5.2.1.9 Do you consider reading crime novels a literary experience? Why?

John: Yes, because I consider everything that is written literature because any piece of writing that is out there is meant to serve a certain purpose. So that's why I believe that it's literature. By piece of writing I mean your things such as newspapers, magazines and all the genres of novels.

Sally: Not really. It's popular culture to me because you have this promotion 'here's this book' and I don't know, it's made up type of thing. It's a case of its fiction in the truer sense

of the word. So you know that it's made up and you know that it's probably not true and it's written in such a way that it is entertaining and captivating, but you don't think about it.

[When asked later whether literary fiction was based on the issues or language, Sally said that the language is what was important to her. She was of the opinion that intense language is what makes a work literary. Sally said that the more intense the language found in a literary work, the more engaging it was for her.]

Dave: Reading in general I find to be literature. It's just a more enjoyable form of literature. You learn from it, it improves your vocabulary, so I do consider it part of literature. You know where someone enjoys reading history, sociology, politics and psychology, crime fiction is also something that we can learn from.

Thembi: Yes I do think it's literature it's just a different genre. I think I consider any book literature.

Sam: I didn't think of that. I was reading for the entertainment. Yes. According to literature you have learnt some things about how the story should be, the characters and everything. Even the words.

Jen: Of course! Hang on, define literary for me. (Laughter.) Yes I do because it might not necessarily be Shakespeare. But when you consider the issues that Shakespeare is engaging with, it's because Shakespeare is 400 years old that we consider him to be great literature. At the time when he was writing, he was not writing for the upper-class, he was writing for everyday people.

Apart from Sally, all the other participants thought of crime fiction as a form of literature. Their reasons for this varied, but all of their views were supported to an extent by Eagleton (1996). Recapping on Eagleton's views in Chapter Two, I indicated that he claims that what is of value to one person may be of no value to another. This means that what may be thought of as literary may differ from person to person. It depends on the reasons that the person or persons have for engaging with whatever literary work. Hence Dave's reason was worth noting as he was of the perspective that he acquired knowledge from crime fiction just as a person reading any other literary work would. Thembi's reason was as simple as the crime novel being a book. As she regarded all books as literature, so too did she place the crime novel under literary works. John too regarded the genre as literature. What John did

unwittingly was to place the genre under the category of unconventional literary works. These according to Hall (2011) are magazines, news articles, documentaries and movies.

The reason why Sally's opinion for not placing the genre under literary fiction is not viewed in the same light as Eagleton's (1996) idea of literariness being relative is because Sally was mostly concerned with the popularity of crime fiction. This is also an aspect that I dealt with in Chapter Two. Thompson (1993) for instance highlights that crime novels about strong women characters have become popular since the 1980s. But these novels' popularity was because there was a readership that was interested in those types of stories. Even Charles Dickens's novels were and still do remain popular, but that surely does not mean his works are not literary.

5.2.1.10 How does your experience of reading crime fiction compare to other books that you might have read or that you still do read?

John: I might be biased but crime fiction for me is more broad and more informative so unlike, for instance biographies, that focus on only a certain number of events and its main focus is this one person or character and everything revolves around them. Unlike with crime fiction, as much as you have the lead character, there'll also be these other facets that also tie it to the story.

[When questioned more on the differences between crime fiction and other genres, John conceded that the investigations and the resolutions were what set crime fiction apart from the rest.]

Sally: I generally read the classics 18th-20th century. The one I'm currently reading is African literature. It is more tasking in that with crime fiction you don't have to think about it. The plot unravels and the writing is easy, here and there you get confused but it all comes together. With literature it's a case of, you always have to be fully attentive.

Dave: I find crime fiction to be more enjoyable. It's more captivating. You won't find me finishing a book in a day or two it will take me months to finish another book.

Thembi: I think crime fiction has more suspense than other genres like romance.

Sam: It's more entertaining. The other ones are so serious.

Jen: For me reading crime fiction is escapism. It's like having tea and cake with a very good friend where you don't have to hide who you are. The relationship is so familiar that you can just relax into it whereas sometimes with other books, unfamiliar authors, unfamiliar genres, it's a good experience to read it but it's like a shoe that needs to get comfortable.

All of the participants commented on the idea that crime fiction was so much more enjoyable than the other genres that they had read. Their responses spoke to the belief that crime novels were an easy read. This was different from other genres that some participants thought required a great deal of thought and analysis. It was easier for them to get comfortable with crime fiction because of the entertainment factor. The participants' level of comfortability with the genre was more apparent in Dave's response who said that he took only days to finish a crime novel. This was unlike other genres where he could take months.

5.2.2 South African Crime Novels Data

In this part of the chapter the focus is on the views that the participants have on the two South African crime novels, Deon Meyer's *Blood Safari* and Roger Smith's *Mixed Blood*. In terms of numbers, the participants were equally split between the two novels. Their views pertain to how they related to the novels, what draws them to the novels (or what they dislike about the novels) and their take on the issues that emanate from these novels. In discussing the interviewees' opinions, I will elaborate, where applicable, by referring to scenes in the novels. But in the event more substantiation is required, one can make reference to the summaries in Chapter Three.

5.2.2.1 Could you relate to the novel/s? For either yes or no give a reason?

John: Yes I could. It [Mixed *Blood*] was quite interesting and its main focus was Cape Town and I'm quite familiar with what happens in Cape Town particularly the Cape Flats. So, it affirmed the information I had about the place because you know that media can sometimes distort certain information or misrepresent places. So now, the Cape Flats, I got more information of what goes on there and it confirmed the media information I have of the place. It also highlighted issues quite differently and it looked at particularly the law enforcement, and it also looked at the issue of a foreign national being in the country and the reasons why some foreign nationals end up in the country. It actually opened my eyes.

Sally: Ja … Being a South African and being exposed to crime so much it's refreshing to see someone articulate it in a way that isn't American. It's local [*Mixed Blood*], even the

characters are local the experience, everything is something that I as South African would experience because they talk about life on the poverty side.

Dave: That novel was hectic. I find the novel [*Mixed Blood*] very interesting. It's just the way it was set out and how society was depicted in South Africa. Yah, I could relate to it. Yah, you get your rich people on the mountain, your poor coloured people in the Cape Flats and yah I could relate to that. It's actually something I saw with my own eyes.

Thembi: Yes, the socio-economic aspect to it. Because, when you look at it [*Blood Safari*] the black people played the gate guard and the other the police officer. The white people were the land owners, the business people, there were game rangers, and it is depicting how our country is right now.

Sam: I could. Because I know about the game reserves, the places nearby and the apartheid era. But for the land, I just thought it was political but the time I read it [*Blood Safari*], it got interesting.

Jen: I thought it [*Blood Safari*] was incredibly interesting. Yes I could. I couldn't relate to Emma because that kind of person small and courageous and dangling men from her finger tips, that's not me. But the way Deon Meyer constructs his characters is indescribably detailed and authentic. I could relate to the circumstances in the book because again it was familiar.

All the participants agreed that they could relate to the novels they read. The reasons why they could relate to the novels depended on which novel each one had read. But what was evident in all responses was that the participants believed that the authors have articulated the social issues quite well. These are issues of corruption, racism, socio-economics, violent crimes and poverty. The participants substantiated these claims by stating that these were issues that they witness. In fact, Sally even went as far as to say that these are issues that she could experience. All of these views attested to the idea that readers brought their own experiences to their reading practice (Luke and Freebody, 1997). When these personal experiences are brought in, it is easier for a reader to make sense of what he/she is reading. In this case, it made the reading experience even more enjoyable.

However, the exception to the trend in which the participants were relating to the issues, is Jen's comment when she said that she could not relate to Emma, a character in Deon Meyer's *Blood Safari.* She just could not relate to the manner in which Emma is depicted as a woman

that has men doing her bidding. But such a view and those similar to it were more apparent in a later question pertaining to the portrayal of characters in the novels.

5.2.2.2 Do you think that the author has captured the essence of South Africa's crime reality as you understand it?

John: Yes he [Roger Smith] did and he also gave a bit more than what I understood or knew. I didn't know that in South Africa we have people who can actually investigate the police force and ensure that they don't engage in any crime; taking into consideration that many law enforcement personnel engage in crime lately. I always thought these people can do whatever that they feel like simply because there's no one who is in charge or there's no one holding them accountable. So to learn that there is a structure that performs that duty was quite an eye-opener and quite informative.

Sally: Yes, well, where I live, what I have experienced, is quite different from that but you are faced by these issues everyday on television. Although you see them you don't get the personal subjective story, but when you read his [Roger Smith] book you start to understand because for you it's only news. He immerses you in their reality so much that you start understanding what it's like and relating even though your live is far from that.

Dave: He [Roger Smith] has, because you get corrupt policemen that are also involved in crime these days. There is a lot more. If it is a poor person being killed, their case isn't really taken seriously or there isn't a lot of investigation done into the case.

Thembi: I think he [Deon Meyer] has. He has interpreted pretty well.

Sam: He [Deon Meyer] did. Those rich people would use the middle-class people like Eric and the crew to do their dirty work while those rich people are sitting in their offices just paying for everything. [Eric is one of the men sent as a hitman by Quintus Wernich, chairman of the board of Southern Cross Avionics, to assassinate Emma and Lemmer.]

Jen: Yes and no. I think [Deon Meyer] he's captured the whole poaching thing really, really well and brought nuances to that in sense it is all very well and good for people in comfortable houses with enough food to turn around and say 'oh people should not do that'. But for me what was tricky you can't really see a white South African magnate being big bad wolf behind the scenes and causing issues. For me, I get it, that yes it probably happens, I mean what do I know about South African big business, I'm in education. [The "white South

African magnate" Jen is referring to is Quintus Wernich, chairman of the board of Southern Cross Avionics.]

The general consensus among the participants on this question was that the authors have done a good job in articulating the country's crime reality. However, Jen's view on this did question the extent to which Deon Meyer has managed to achieve this aspect. She understood the issue pertaining to poaching and the various debates about it. But she was unsure of Meyer's attempt in depicting a wealthy white man as a person that is a mastermind of such devious plots. Sam had a different perspective to that held by Jen regarding rich people making plots behind the scenes. She did not make any racial statement regarding the point, but she did feel that Meyer has depicted something that is relevant to South Africa. Sally's view about Roger Smith's novel was that the author has done brilliantly in immersing the reader into the issues. She appreciated this more because she thought that news stories gave a clinical account of crime events. John was of the view that Smith's novel had been a source of information for him. This is a point that relates to an earlier comment made by Dave who claimed that he acquired knowledge when engaging with crime fiction.

5.2.2.3 What was your favourite part of the book and why?

John: There are a lot of parts that were my favourite. The part where the foreigner kills the people that broke into his house, that's where it all started for me because I was part of this person who was on the run, always on the lookout. But there are many aspects of the novels that were interesting. [Roger Smith… John is referring to the opening scene of the novel where Jack Burn's home is invaded by two gangsters called Rikki and Faried.]

Sally: I want to say when they set Gatsby alight but I didn't actually enjoy that. That was a really nice thing but it wasn't the highlight. I kind a like the security-guard and his moments. There is something very solitary. For me I could relate to his solitary character. So my favourite part of that would be the torture. [Roger Smith… Sally is referring to the time when Bennie Mongrel was assisting Jack Burn to track down is kidnapped son. Mongrel was torturing Barnard for that reason but also because Barnard had killed his dog.]

Dave: My favourite part is where they burn that guy. [Roger Smith… Dave is referring to a scene where community members resort to mob justice and they set Barnard, a corrupt policeman, alight. He says that he likes this part because of the irony of it. Historically this would only happen to people of colour and now it is happening to a white man.]

Thembi: The shooting where Emma and Lemmer got attacked on their way back from somewhere, I think that changed the whole book basically because in the beginning it dragged on and the story didn't make sense. [Deon Meyer… Thembi is referring to a scene where Emma and Lemmer were ambushed by assassins while they were still looking for her brother in Mpumalanga. This incident led to Emma's hospitalisation.]

Sam: I've got two. It's interesting that Lemmer could know that Steve Moller was lying, I couldn't understand how he knew it. [Deon Meyer… Sam is referring to a scene when Lemmer was trying to figure out who actually knew of Emma's brother's whereabouts. He managed to corner Moller, who was Cobie's employer, and by studying his body language, he could tell that he was lying when he said he did not know where Cobie was. The other scene she likes is when Lemmer kills the assassins sent by Quintus Wernich, chairman of the board of Southern Cross Avionics, to kill Emma and Lemmer.]

Jen: Towards the end where you had two stories [in *Blood Safari*] going at the same time. You heard Cobies's story and that was interspersed with what was happening in the present day, what Lemmer was busy doing. That I loved because I just thought that was so cleverly put together in terms of writing structure. What else I loved was when Lemmer had to speak to Emma when she was in a coma and we found out his background. It is pretty late in the book. You know up until that point we've drawn a whole lot of conclusions about his background.

The above responses were different at face value as they highlighted different aspects of the novels. Two of these, Jen and Thembi, were related to Meyer's writing style, while, an inference can be made on the other four responses. The inference is that most of the participants took pleasure at the retribution element that emanated in their favourite moments of the novels. This is an idea that Reddy (1996) raises when stating that readers of crime fiction see the genre as a means to get revenge. This was evident in Dave's comment when talking about him taking pleasure at Inspector Barnard's agonising death. Barnard is a crooked policeman full of hatred who commits hateful crimes. That is why both Sally and Dave enjoyed the policeman's torture and death. The same applied to John who was thrilled by the manner in which Jack Burn killed the two gangsters who had invaded his home. Sam's initial comment about Meyer's character, Lemmer, differed from the previously discussed opinions. She was intrigued and pleased by Lemmer's ability to establish that Moller was lying. When Lemmer did this, he had resolved a mystery. But the fact that she

also enjoyed Lemmer taking revenge by killing the assassins resonated with the idea that was shared by John, Dave and Sally. Overall, these comments illustrate the key idea about crime fiction, which is that there is a satisfactory conclusion (Naidu, 2013; Warnes, 2012; Cloete and Andersson, 2006).

5.2.2.4 What did you not like about the book? Why?

John: At the moment I can't say because I looked at what was good rather than what is bad. When I started reading, I made up my mind that I am not going to compare this book with what I've read so far, international. I felt that it wouldn't be fair. I better judge the book on what it is rather than my expectations. [Roger Smith]

Sally: I think it's portrayal of women and the black guy in the book was really, really stereotypical. [Roger Smith]

Dave: Yah, some of the language is a bit harsh, but maybe the writer was in that context where he wrote it based on the research that he done. [Roger Smith]

Thembi: When they were sending Emma and Lemmer back and forth at the Kruger. It was dragging. [Deon Meyer]

Sam: When Lemmer was telling Emma some stories I just wish he explained what he told Emma. [Deon Meyer… Sam is referring to a scene in the hospital where Lemmer is telling a comatose Emma about his past.]

Jen: I would have liked Captain Jack Phatudi's character to be fleshed a bit more. He was angry all the time, I get that, but I thought he was a really interesting character. I would have liked a lot more interaction between him and Lemmer. [Deon Meyer]

As in the previous question, there were responses to this question that made reference to the authors' writing style. For Jen, Meyer could have developed the policeman's character more by making him more interactive. Thembi did not enjoy the investigative steps that Emma and Lemmer were taking. She thought that it was too stretched out. The same can be said for Sam who thought that Meyer should have shortened the scene in which Lemmer talks to a comatose Emma. But this view differs from Jen's comment from the previous question, who actually enjoyed Lemmer's monologue. She thought that the author revealed more about Lemmer by making him recount his personal story.

With regards to Smith, Dave expressed a concern about the strong language. But he supposed that the author's research had led to him writing the story like that. Sally thought that Smith's portrayal of women and "the black man" was stereotypical.

5.2.2.6 What do you make of the conclusion? Was the ending to your satisfaction?

John: I could never say an ending to a book was satisfactory. You end up thinking, why did this happen? Why did that happen? I end up thinking, why did we have to end it here because we could still continue. [Roger Smith]

Sally: I actually like it a lot. Jack was a good guy turned bad turned good turned bad again, so, after all of that, I like the fact that he got to pay for what he did because after all that has happened you'd think he's the underdog and he would ride of to the sunset because now he's the guy that killed bad guys. But I wasn't forgetting the fact that he did bad things and most that happened in the book is his fault. [Roger Smith]

Dave: No, absolutely not. I wanted to know. He just said 'and then he saw nothing'. Jack had to go to court or die. [Roger Smith]

Thembi: No, I am one of those people when I read a book or watching a movie I need a proper conclusion. I felt like it left me to my imagination. [Deon Meyer]

Sam: In crime fiction, if everything is resolved in a way that people are free it takes your fright away. [Deon Meyer]

Jen: At least you don't have them driving off in a clouded dust into the sunset. I like that. The fact that it is a hint, rather than a certainty. Apart from that too convenient single master mind behind the scenes, I like the fact that Jacobus did turn out to be Emma's brother. I liked his story that was very satisfyingly concluded. In terms of the last few pages, I like that Lemmer tries to go back to living his life. [Deon Meyer]

In this question the participants agreed on there being conclusions in both novels. However, the issue for some participants was that the authors did not spend sufficient time elaborating on the various conclusions. Dave felt that Smith had not really punished Burn for his crimes. He was not satisfied with the fact that Burn got into an accident. He was unsure whether Burn survived or died. In making this claim, Dave was unconsciously saying that Smith had defied a current convention of the genre that suggests that criminals do not go unpunished for

their evil deeds. But Sally's comment suggested otherwise as she was of the opinion that Burn was punished for his crimes.

In Thembi's reading of Meyer's novel, she also thought that the author did not spend time addressing the conclusion. However, Thembi's opinion was at odds with that of Jen's. Jen felt content with how Meyer summed up issues and that there was no fairytale ending to the novel. But what she could not accept was the idea of a mastermind who was responsible for most of the problems behind the scenes.

5.2.2.7 How were women and black/white people portrayed for you?

John: For me this particular book highlighted all different types of personality within people of colour. I was quite surprised and amazed that the person from the ICD was black. Most times you'd think that these just positions for the big boers. Tables were turned because he was responsible for a white guy other than it happening the other way around. There were also times when black people were portrayed as ordinary like you would expect for instance the waitresses at the restaurant. [Roger Smith… John was referring to Zondi, the official sent from the police ministry, when talking about the person from the ICD. Furthermore, when asked more about the portrayal of women, he eventually said that Roger Smith depicted them as average persons. This was something that he regarded as unfair.]

Sally: I didn't like the way the book portrayed all women actually. There's a sense they are all meek. [Roger Smith… For the race issue, Sally said that nothing really stood out for apart from the manner in which Zondi was portrayed. She felt that Smith had created him as a black man with an insatiable appetite for sex.]

Dave: I found it to be a reality actually. Because you find that the chick that was smoking tik (what was her name?) she finds that the guy comes in and beats her up and she's used to it. [Roger Smith… Dave was referring to Carmen who was being constantly abused by her husband, Rikki, one of the two gangsters that invaded the Burns' home. But Dave also said that the novel had to be written in this way so that it could 'hit home'.]

Thembi: I don't feel like I related at all. Sometimes I felt like she was naïve. At some point I felt like she was weak. She wasn't my favourite character. [Deon Meyer… Thembi was talking about Emma, Deon Meyer's female character.]

Sam: You know that woman is strong. If I was Emma I wouldn't go that far to look for my brother. Because she gets those threats but she doesn't give up. [Deon Meyer… Sam was referring to Emma's determination to find her brother. She also thought that Emma's portrayal was quite 'natural' although she did not feature in the novel after her hospitalisation.]

Jen: Only a little bit. The reason why I say that is all of his women are sexually very open. That for me, I don't know, is that unusual female behaviour? Is that like a conservative white Afrikaner type of behaviour? I don't know. It's not something I will ever do. [Deon Meyer… I had asked Jen if she thought white women were put into a neat little box or was the author challenging stereotypes. Hence the above answer. But she was however content with Emma being protected by a male.)

Half of the respondants, two of which were from males, were content with the general portrayal of characters in both novels. In fact, John was "surprised" by Smith when he put a black policeman in a superior position by giving him the responsibility to investigate a white policeman. John has taken note of the idea that Smith was making an attempt at "bending" ideas of white male superiority. As a result, Smith has "reshaped" John's notions by making him consider contemporary ideas of present-day South Africa.

Meanwhile, Dave was also satisfied with the women's submissiveness. He thought that it made the story realistic and carried a clear message. Unlike Dave, Sally was dissatisfied with Smith's portrayal of all women. She thought that Smith had just made them meek. This was despite the fact that Burn's wife, Susan, ended up taking charge of her own life and that of her child towards the end of the novel.

Jen and Thembi also voiced their discontent over Meyer's portrayal of women. Jen's reason pertained to the women being too sexually expressive. This was something she could not relate to. Thembi thought that Emma was "naïve" and "weak" at times. Thembi found it hard to relate to that. As noted, Sam had a different opinion about Emma. Unlike Thembi, Sam thought that that Emma was "strong" and "brave". But this did not mean that Sam could relate to the character for she admitted that she would have not had the courage that Emma had.

5.2.3 Summary and Conclusion of Interview Data

The data suggests that the South African crime novels of this research study live up to the participants' expectations of the crime genre. To answer this question, the participants' had to be asked what they enjoyed about crime fiction. To that question, most of the participants conceded that they enjoyed the idea of order being restored in crime novels. However, with regards to the two South African novels, there were outcries about the authors not expanding and providing more detailed endings. But the general feeling was that the authors did meet the requirements of a satisfactory conclusion.

Another question of significance in answering this question was whether the participants related to the novels. In general, all of the participants did relate to the issues raised in both novels. Furthermore, this was supported by the participants' acknowledgement that the authors were realistic in their presentation of present day South Africa.

The aspect that may be argued that the expectations were not met is the fact that some of the participants were not satisfied with the portrayal of women. The comments pertaining to women being submissive suggests that the authors have yet to make the advancements that the genre made decades ago. But, such comments were countered by an opinion by another participant that believed that Emma, in Meyer's novel, is quite courageous. Other participants believed that the novels were merely reflecting what was happening in our society. Hence, it was these participants' expectation that the authors should be pragmatic in their approach to writing about South Africa.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I summarise and conclude on the findings of the research study by referring to key parts of the research study that arose throughout the chapters. What I will also do is to reflect on the limitations of this research study. This will be the basis to the recommendations I make for possible future research studies in this field.

6.1 Summary and Conclusion

This research study's overarching aim was to look at how students at Wits University engage with crime fiction as a literary practice. As stated before, this idea was not only brought about by my interest in the genre, but it was carried from a previous research study that I had conducted as an Honours student at the Wits School of Education. Looking at whether a section of third and fourth year English majors did have literary practices, I discovered that the students did read outside the university domain and one of the genres they enjoyed reading was crime fiction.

As a number of scholars speculate, as seen in previous chapters, the interest in this genre for South Africans could be because readers are trying to find restoration in these novels (Andersson and Cloete, 2006, Warnes, 2012, and Orford, 2013). Based on these assertions as well as that of Chisholm (cited in Ncala, 2012), who supposed that students were grappling with social issues that emanated from novels in general, I set out to establish a total of fourteen participants' reasons for engaging with the genre of crime fiction.

This was not a question that could be easily answered. There were a number of nuances that I had to initially consider. The first of these related to establishing what a literary reading practice is. Based on the literature reviewed in this research study, a literary reading practice is a reader's engagement with, among others, plays, poetry and novels (Lazar, 1993). To add to this list, I pointed out that Hall (2011) argued that unconventional works should be included in this definition. Her view is that students also draw knowledge from films, newspapers, magazines and documentaries.

Based on this broad definition, I accepted that for this research study the crime novel is a work of literature. But to ensure that this research study's participants' engagement with crime fiction was acknowledged as a literary practice, I further discussed two other relevant notions. These were the theory of critical literacy and the literariness of crime fiction. Under

the theoretical discussion of critical literacy, I noted important facets that are more pertinent to this research study.

First, this research study accepts that reading is a social practice. In my view of this aspect, I suggested that a good reader has to have both sets of skills, social awareness and technical ability. These play a key role in a reader's ability to engage a text holistically. Luke and Freebody's (1997) "social roles of a reader" explained exactly what these skills entail. Essentially, what is looked for in a good reader is his/her ability to deconstruct a text, participate in the reading experience by bringing his/her ideas to the practice, understand what the text can be used for and, to be able to think analytically about the text.

The second aspect concerns the idea that texts are not neutral. They are always giving a particular version of events "shaping", "bending" and "repositioning" our worlds Luke and Freebody (1997). This is obviously the case with crime fiction too. I illustrated one of the ways that the genre achieves this in Chapter Three. Nonetheless, to see this in practice, in Chapter Five, there were respondents who demonstrated these facets in their comments. Some of the participants' lack of appreciation of how certain characters were portrayed in the novels shows that they were aware of the ways in which the texts were trying to position them. But not all experiences were of this nature. In one of the responses, Roger Smith's novel made a participant reconsider his ideas of the police force. The participant's comment suggests that he has now acquired new thoughts about policing in South Africa. One of these thoughts is that police officers can be held responsible for their actions.

As far as the literariness of crime fiction is concerned, the research study highlighted a number of sentiments. What was initially noted is that literary fiction was thought of by some scholars as works that are sophisticated in language as well as the subject of academic enquiry. This was the primary basis that crime fiction's literariness was questioned on. As it were, these perspectives had their shortcomings. The first of these is that the genre is already being studied in university courses. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter Two, even the world-renowned author Charles Dickens published works that are classified under the genre. His writing style is considered to be sophisticated and his works are very popular.

But to put this matter to rest, I then referred to Eagleton's (1996) idea that what is of value to one person could have no value to another as far as literature is concerned. In essence, what emanated in my recount of Eagleton (1996) is that what counts as literary is rather subjective. However, I strongly believe that there must be merit to that subjectiveness. This is why I

could not accept one of the participant's view of why she regarded crime fiction not to be literary fiction.

After handling the various ideas pertaining to viewing the reading of crime fiction as a literary practice, I then focused on the conventions of the genre. In Chapter Three of the research study, I recorded the genre's history as well as the various subgenres that emerged over time. These included the Newgate novel, the sensation novel, short stories, the detective novel, mysteries, the hard-boiled detective genre, police-procedural detective novels, the spy novel and the thriller novel. A number of things were discussed regarding all these subgenres, but what was of interest to this research study was the genre's distinguishing characteristic. This was of course the idea of a satisfactory conclusion to a novel. I then set out to establish whether students at Wits University felt that this is what drew them to the genre. Below, I discuss this question including others that I have already set out in Chapters One and Four.

6.1.1 What draws students to crime fiction novels?

Looking at the data from the interviews, the responses that answer this question can be extrapolated from the question of whether participants enjoy reading crime fiction. In response to this question the participants indicated that they did enjoy reading crime novels. Some of the respondents talked about enjoying the action, suspense and thrill of crime novels. Others thought that they enjoyed the genre because of its ability to have satisfactory conclusions. Similar findings were evident in the post that was put out by a participant of the virtual book club. In those responses there were at least two participants who referred to the resolution of a crime as reasons why they engaged with the genre. While the other respondents talked about their liking for suspense and action.

6.1.2 How do students engage with crime fiction novels?

To answer this question I refer to the interviewees' responses about whether they read crime novels for entertainment and/or social commentary. This question, as well as whether the participants regard crime fiction as literature, will indicate the participants' approach when they engage with crime novels. From most of those responses, an argument can be made that the participants engaged with crime fiction as a form of literature. For the participants, it was also a form of literature that they found entertaining although there were serious issues found in these novels.

6.1.3 Do South African crime novels live up to the participants' expectations as to what draws them to the genre?

This question pertains to the interview section that looked at the two South African novels by Deon Meyer and Roger Smith. What is quite apparent in most responses in the interview data was the participants' enjoyment of the thrill, suspense and action. So, at least in that respect, they did enjoy the novels that I had selected for the research study.

One of the main focus points of enquiry that I pursued in the interviews was whether the interviewees did seek a satisfactory resolution in crime fiction. As noted before, most participants did admit to that. This is one of the reasons why the participants enjoyed the South African crime novels selected for this research study. However, some participants did mention a desire for the authors to provide more details when concluding the stories. An additional factor as to why the novels lived up to the participants' expectations was that participants could relate to the issues presented in the novels. But as some of them said, they could not relate to some of the characters.

6.1.4 How (if at all) does using Facebook as a social network enable readers of crime fiction to engage with fellow readers about crime fiction?

It is known that at least since the early 1990s online communities were established to discuss crime fiction and DorathyL is one of these communities, as noted in Chapter Four in the section about virtual book clubs. Hence, my intention was to test whether students who enjoy reading crime novels could organise themselves into an online community, although this one was much smaller than those that have been long established. Furthermore, I was also testing a recommendation that I had made in my Honours research project that pertains to exploring the idea of establishing online groups for students so they can engage with each other about their literary reading practices.

More than the rest of my fellow group members I undoubtedly had more reason to make this work, but the fact remains, just like them, I was a student when the group was established. Nevertheless, the private Facebook group of thirteen members (including myself) did manage to engage with one another about our love for crime fiction. How Facebook was an enabling forum was because of several reasons:

(a) Facebook is a user-friendly medium for all computer literate people and it can be accessed freely not only on computers, but on mobile devices such as cellphones and tablets and the participants had access to either one or both;
(b) Unlike the physical setting, where persons have to set a date and time for their book club meetings, Facebook allowed the participants to approach topics at a time suitable for them. So, not only was the communication instant at times, but participants were given more time to think about their contributions to the group and;
(c) A lot of information about crime fiction, especially South African crime fiction, is found mostly on the internet, so, as a visually impaired person who also participated in the group, I was able to share some of this information with fellow readers;

6.2 Limitations and Recommendations

This research study looked at students' engagement with crime fiction as a literary practice on a general level. But as a South African research study, the focus in the data collecting phase, more so the virtual book club discussions, showed that these readers were much more familiar with the international market than with local content. This is a limitation to the research study as it would have been interesting if the participants had expressed their views in relation to their reading of the South African crime novel. But fortunately, the South African aspect was brought into the research study when the focus turned towards the two novels both in the theoretical chapter and the data analysis chapter. However, I do recommend that in future research studies for the attention to be more, if not solely, on readers that read more of the South African crime novel.

Another limitation concerns my handling of the virtual book club. Although this was not an objective or key question of the research study, I failed to engage the participants with the more pertinent issues that emanated from the literature chapters. One of these was discussing the genre's conventions. This includes what the participants thoughts are about satisfactory conclusions. The other issue that I did not deal with explicitly enough, or extensively, pertains to the social issues in crime fiction novels. These issues include, among others, matters of racial and gender stereotypes. Hence, my recommendation is that when conducting a similar research study, a researcher should factor in all aspects of the research study. There should not only be a focus on the main objectives or questions when the data is being collected.

In conclusion, this research study links back to its title, Engaging With Crime Fiction as a Literary Practice. First, literary reading practice cannot be narrowly defined. It is apparent in the literature covered as well as the data for this research study, that a literary practice is a social activity. Second, the action cannot be thought of only in terms of the technical aspects of reading. There also needs to be consideration of the emotions that a reader feels as well as the experiences that he/she brings to the text. It is in that in which the actual enjoyment is found. Finally, the subjectiveness of the entire reading experience is emphasised by how the reader relates to the literature. In this research study, not only was there evidence showing that the participants did relate to the South African crime novels, there was also evidence illustrating that the participants valued the genre in general. This is why most of the participants thought of the genre as literature. The genre's ability to provide a reader with hope, suggests strongly that crime fiction evokes emotions that emanate from the participants' experiences and thoughts about their society. Reading crime fiction is indeed a literary practice.

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APPENDIX A: VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB DISCUSSIONS

TOPIC A

Crime fiction is said to be quite popular in South Africa with approximately 40 authors' books falling under the genre. If that's the case we, as members of this group, are among the many people that enjoy reading crime fiction in this country. I can remember how I was introduced to crime fiction. It was by chance that I stumbled across a book that was written by Robert Crais (an American author) who now has become one of my favourite authors. I had been a reader of fantasy novels (a genre that I now do not fancy) and the title of the book Voodoo River was read to me at a library and thinking that it was about black magic I took it. Of course it wasn't the case for the novel was about crime and from then onwards it is crime that I preferred engaging in. Can you share with us how you were introduced to crime fiction?

GROUP RESPONSES

Matthew: I can never forget the first book that I read which is written by James Patterson. *Second Chance*, given to me in an audio form. Well at the time I had never heard of something like audio books. Being the occasional reader that I was, an interest aroused in me and then I started reading the novel which somehow was confusing me. I then longed to be rescued from the confusion. Which made me to continue reading more, and the more I read the more I began to understand the title of the book. It gave me great pleasure and a sense of adventure to think and be like the character detective, which was a great thriller for me. That is how my addition began. Once you pick one up to read, you simply cannot put it down.

Vlad: I was first introduced to crime fiction round about the same time as Melusi and like him the first crime novel i read was voodoo river by Robert Crais...from there onwards i read more of his books and hav found myself a fan of Robert Crais (even though i have not read all of his books)... I hav also read a novel by james patterson titled kill me if u can and i agree with Matthew he is one of those authors who grips u frm the 1st page.

Melusi: So, Matthew, your first encounter with a crime fiction novel was with an audiobook... That must have been an overwhelming experience. Was it the book that confused you or the format in which you were accessing the book?

John: So I assume this treasure is found by chance, but any way here is my story. Frustrated by the fact that I was not reading as much as I should, I went to one of my English lecturers

to ask for books that I would read over the winter holidays [2011]. She pointed me to a table outside the corridor of her office and said I could pick two or three. I scanned a few, but only one caught my eye 'Nine Dragons' by Micheal Connelly (American). I thought the book was a fantasy novel since its abot dragons. I went bsck to show the lecturer who just smiled and said "Good choice". It was a week before I was to go home, when I got to my room I got right on it! And...BOOOOM!!! Its crime fiction with lead Detective Harry Bosch...! Later that evening I shared my excitement with my dear friend Melusi, it was then that I found out that he is a fan of the genre too. So, as the saying goes; I was hooked. Micheal Connelly is still my number ONE.

Lynne: I was recently introduced to crime-fiction about a year and half ago, that's if Nancy Drew Girl Girl Detective does not count as crime-fiction which I read in Primary. If it's not then I guess the first crime-fiction book I read was the Lincoln Lawyer by Michael Connelly, which I must say, best crime-fiction book I've ever read thus far, still need to explore this genre.

Melusi: Lynne, Nancy most definitely does fall under the genre... It's probably mystery... You are thus far the most experienced reader... 🙂Remember people crime fiction is the broader genre while detective, courtroom dramas, mysteries, cosy forensics, thrillers, whodunits etc. are subgenres. There does not need to be shootings, dead bodies, violence or anything of the nature to make it crime fiction. So, Lynne and John, you guys read books from the same author... Would you guys say MC captivated your interest and ensured that you were an addict to the genre?

Lynne: Most definitely. He managed to do what I want every book to do when I read it, which is straight out capture and draw my attention on the very first page. First pages for me usually say a lot about whether I'll continue reading that book or not

Melusi: True that... But interestingly enough other readers use 15 pages as a bench mark. When I was in the dark about Voodoo River, I continued to read on because I was anticipating some of the stereotypes I had about fantasy books or magic to come through. But by the 2nd chapter or so all of that was soon forgotten. And yeah I agree MC is OF THE BINGES. Anybody who wants to try his work out just holler.

Thembi: I've always been a book lover, but mostly read self-growth and business books, the only crime-fiction book I had read was a high school prescribed book. And then this year.... I

got introduced to Crime Fiction by the founder of this group with 1st to Die by James Patterson. Yeah, so let's just say I've found a new life-long partner - Crime fiction.

Dave: I remember the 1st time I was introduced to crime fiction. It was the Lincoln Lawyer. I watched the movie them my friend told me that the book was ten times better than the movie. I was never an abbot reader in fact I hated reading until I read this book I was hooked and read books at a rapid pace now I would forsake sleep to read.

Tony: I remember very well long time ago when I read the first James Hadley Chase from my father's collection. Albeit they are very old, they still do it for me because I've read almost forty of his books and I still can't retreat.

Lindy: I first encountered crime fiction in high school when I had to write a book review for English. When was young I wasn't very interested with reading and so I had to ask my mother if I could borrow a book from her ... Deciding which precious book out of her "library" she would lend me probably took longer than actually reading the book. Eventually she decided on Hide and Seek, a James Patterson novel. At first I was unsure of the genre but after about half way I was hooked and couldn't put the book down until the very end! To this day I am a loyal JP fan ...

Melusi: Ah what a book. Did you manage that book at school Lindy? Reading it I took a while to get into it. But after a few chapters I got the hang of it.

Lindy: I think what got me through the first chapters was the thought of my homework deadline but what helped was having my mother to talk to and discuss scenes with. I find whenever I read books similar to this, having somebody who has read the book or is familiar with the genre, can drive you to read further or get more involved ... I don't know how to explain it 🙄its similar to having a friend who watches the same TV series as you ... You tend to get carried away in discussions and get excited for what's to come ... If that makes sense ...

TOPIC B

Don't you just love reading a book that gets you so involved that you think of the characters as real persons even though you know that they are nothing but fiction… I often use to ponder and talk to friends about some characters that would grab my attention to such a point that I would even wish that they are out there somewhere… Dare I say, I would even feature some of these characters in my dreams…lol I don't think that it is a phenomenon that is exclusive to kids, we too, as adults have favourite characters. In my case, there are two… I

refer to them as the dynamic duo – Elvis Cole and Joe Pike – who are characters by Robert Crais. I admire the friendship that exists between these two for the simple reason because it is pure and true. When people talk about putting your all into it, no one demonstrates it better for me than Elvis and Joe. So I ask you folks… Who is/are your favourite character/s? Please share with us details of the person/s and why you admire him/her/them? NB.: These need not be heroes for villains also tend to be captivating for some people.

GROUP RESPONSES

Matthew: I'm not a die-hard fan of villains however, Gary Soneji in the Alex Cross series is definitely my man. He thinks like the villain that he is. He walks the walk without going around and telling everyone how well he can commit a perfect crime and get away with it. The way he thinks gets my mind working and attempting hard to figure out what his next move is going to be. This is one character that can do both, he can excite you and sadden you almost every time. Trying to follow him is a roller coaster ride. But what excites me the most is the point that this character displays how great James Patterson (Author) is in his ability to create such exciting villains. Catch him and figure out he's next move if you can!

Melusi: I must say Matthew that Patterson creates the most interesting or exciting villains. It must be so hard for a writer to do that but Patterson is definitely king in that. All of Alex Cross' foes pose some serious challenges and reading about some of these baddies you realise that they are ordinary people, in some aspects, no different from the man or woman you come across in your life.

Thembi: 1st To die - James Patterson, the medical examiner Claire Washburn, I loved her personality, she was loud and smart, analytical and observant, I do acknowledge the fact that I might like her cause she's black and unconsciously felt I could relate to her better than all the other women. But I always like female characters who are portrayed as powerful and independent and Claire's vulnerabilities were never shown in the book.

Melusi: Great character that is Thembi. I like the fact that even though she is preoccupied with a demanding job (medical examiner) she is still able to run her household effortlessly. Her husband seems to be playing a secondary role without any fuss. I am glad that Patterson didn't create this stereotypical character of a powerful woman that is struggling to keep her personal life together. A trap that authors can fall into now and again. I recommend for anyone interested in this type of character to read Patricia Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta series. Kay is not Jasmyne but very similar. I have the series for anyone would like to read it.

And from the perspective of the research study, Margie Orford (one of the novels I asked you guys to read) is another book that is of a smart and powerful woman.

Dave: i am a Pike fan through and through i wish i could find someone like that who could be my bodyguard one day and cole he is cool too the two of them are my men that i want in real life joe does not say much i like that because i also dont speak that much PIKE

John: Harry Bosch is my Honorable Detective, he leaves no stone unturned. And I like the fact that he doesn't rest until a case is solved. Finally he favours no one, to him everyone deserves a share of dignity from hooker to tycoon.

Melusi: What do you mean by saying that everybody deserves their "share of dignity" John? Does your character protect all in sundry including criminals? And Selwyn, are you drawn to Pike's character because of his physical strengths?

John: I mean that he gives everyone a chance to have Justice served on their case(s)

Vlad: The GHOST!!!! From kill me if u can by robert patterson

Vlad: i mean james patterson

Melusi: Why do you like that character Vlad?

Vlad: He is a Master of deception in his infamous career as an assassin and I admire his sense of humour. He gives me the impression he takes his job as an assassin like a joke but this is not the case as james patterson illustrates him as a very efficient killer.

Leanne: I'm definitely a die hard Alex Cross fan, he is an excellent detective who succeeds at catching the bad guys. The story lines involving him always have masterful plots that keep me wondering "will he or won't he", Definitely the irresistible hero... You can't read an Alex Cross novel without Nana Mama, his grandmother. She creates a loving home environment for Alex and his children but she is still a force to be reckoned with. She says what needs to be said and I love her dry and witty sense of humour ...

TOPIC C

In previous discussions a number of views raised touched on how (if at all) authors write about societal issues. When addressed in novels, these societal issues resonate through characters lives and as much as it is being said that crime fiction is plot driven, because of the social issues, we need to acknowledge too that the characters play an intricate role in the

novels we read. But now, what needs to be looked at is how authors portray these characters. Do you as a reader relate in any way to the manner in which females and/or males are being depicted? Are these individuals a figment of our imaginations or do we actually interact with such individuals and/or do we encounter real life stories of these characters? Think of that extraordinary hero and that cunning villain as well as those characters that play a support role in crime fiction, and share with us whether you think authors are on key or are they way off.

NB. Please take into consideration the following aspects: physical (includes socio-economic status), Emotional, mental, spiritual, intelligence, intellect, etc.

GROUP RESPONSES

Lindy: I love reading novels that have strong female characters in, and I feel that it is a reflection of society and how it changes, but I do also love reading novels that have strong male leads too. I find that if a novel is written in first person, I tend to relate more and feel more involved, and I feel that I live within that society or that I'm hunting the villain with them. I become that character. Reading about the society that they live in helps me place the content socially and allows me to be an intricate part of the novel.

Jasmyne: I've definitely related emotionally to quite a few female characters and it certainly makes it a lot more interesting to read and understand.

Melusi: Any particular examples ladies? And what traits do those characters have that you relate to? Lindy... Hmm, strong male leads... 🙂Is this some Hollywood hot sexy guy thing that you are insinuating? lol

Lindy: haha no not really. I like the intellect that they use and have, that's more appealing to me. I dig Scarpetta and her life, and those that are around her and I dig Alex Delaware and the way he works 🙂

Melusi: I think that Scarpetta's niece, Lucy, is very smart, but having interacted with so many geeks, I am not sure how realistic that character is. Don't get me wrong, I like her, but sometimes she seems like a movie character. Characters that surround Scarpetta? I'm not sure that I like her partner. He is "too right" and his lack of remorse at times really works me up. He's just a bit too detached for my liking.

Lindy: I get what you saying 🙂and at times I also feel that Lucy is too fictional, and I also understand why Benton is the way he is, he's been through so much so I feel that he can be detached and his lack of remorse aids Scarpetta, I don't think its ever hindered her to the point where she cannot do her job properly.

Melusi: The thing is Lindy, those two are sooo absorbed by their professions. 🙂Look at Benton, in essence, his marriage got ruined by him I think and I cannot recall him trying to mend things. He seems content with how things ended and that really bothers me. 🙂

Lindy: yea you have a point, but Scarpetta is also pretty absorbed in her profession. they all have their passions and I feel that sometimes they aren't able to balance it all.

Sally: I absolutely love Lucy as well...for me the fact that she is so obviously fictional is more of an advantage for the reader(especially if ur a female),she is relateable in the sense that she is the chick every girl wishes dey were: amazingly beautiful, super smart and highly driven...for me the best fictional character ever has to be Hannibal Lector(I hav never read abt anyone that comes even close)...he is highly intelligent, psychopathic bt still retains somewhat of a vulnerable streak(you can't help feeling sorry for him given his traumatic childhood) and he is just very unpredictable and perceptive...as a psychology student those are the character traits that intrigue me the most, plus his character is also an opportunity to see the man behind the ski mask(so to speak) n the other side of the story(unlike the stereotypical 'he's such a monster' version that is often portrayed in popular culture)...he is my personal favourite and an amazing character

Melusi: I'd like to put Lucy up against Lisbeth, a character by Stieg Larsson. 🙂He is the guy who wrote the *Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played With Fire* and *The Girl Who Kicked The Hornet's Nest* which are all referred to as the Millennium Trilogy. I get what you say about Lucy being fictional Sally and that is perhaps why girls like her, but there is something practical about Lisbeth. Reading about her as a scruffy girl that turns into a strong intelligent woman makes her admiral. She is an outcast that fights for survival and is relentless in her pursuit for the truth. If anyone has read novels on both characters, who do you think takes it in terms of being number 1 lady?

Sally: Well iv watched da movie, which in my experience is rarely as good as da actual book, bt I am a bit familiar wit Lisbeth's character...honestly, she is a bit too rough around da edges

for me 2 reli identify with, bt lyk u said: she is way more realistic and practical than Lucy...bt unfortunately Lucy stil takes da crown for me lol #sorry!

Melusi: Hahaha... She is a tough lady.

Lindy: I love Lisbeth and Lucy both are epic but Lisbeth takes the cake, she's just amazing 🙂

Melusi: Right on Lindy... You can't help but admire her. You read them all? Sally and anyone else interested I plead with you to read the trilogy. It gets better and better.

Lindy: yea I did, and watched the available movies in sweedish and english. its an amazing trilogy and I loved it to bits. really worth it

Melusi: I guess what makes the novels phenomenal, is that much of Stieg's work was based on good solid investigative journalism. It's conspiracy but the belief is that he was assassinated.

Lindy: that's a pretty scary thought. either way the last part of the last book that was ghost written was still brilliant and even though Stieg didn't finish it, it was still epic. he had an amazing way of captivating the audience and keeping them interested in the books. I was pretty bleak when I had read the last book

Melusi: Makes one wonder what he had in mind for the seven other works. I guess we'll never know.

Lindy: that's true, I'll just enjoy the trilogy we had 🙂I think I might actually reread them, haven't read them in a while

Thembi: For me villains are usually too fictional, the things that they do in books tend to be very unrealistic. I find it hard to think that their evilness is that extreme. I also love strong female characters, I usually enjoy books that have female leads more than ones that have male leads.

Melusi: So Thembi do you think that humans cannot be as violent, deceptive, sadistic and voyeuristic as they are depicted in novels? The reason why am asking is because most authors at some other time refer to the most heinous crimes committed by Jack the Ripper, Ted Bundy, etc. and more close at home, we just have to switch on the TV and radio or read the newspapers to find the most horrific crimes. Babies are being raped because some deranged person thinks it will cure his AIDS or beatings/murders of the elderly. If I'm not

mistaken the most recent high-profile case was of Advocate Barbie (pardon the spelling) who abused kids in orphanages.

Matthew: i think that that the authors are doing an absolutely fantastic job. if you look at gary the villian he seems to be thinking in the same way we think about others who seem to be better than us and that leads him to jealousy and he kills. Therefore the authers are spot on since sometimes we think like the villains when we are angry or at times dissappointed!

John: I must say that the authers of crime fiction are excelent (those I have read). Most of their charactors are not superfluous, they are still connected to reality and I think that this is the reason why most of us (readers) tend to be attached to them; especially the lead charactors.

TOPIC D

CRAZY-INSANE or just simply CREATIVE?
We all read crime fiction for a number of reasons, an aspect that we undoubtedly will continue to discuss in our group. But in so many discussions that I have had about the nature of crime novels there still remains a lot that is not accounted for. When reading how descriptive some of these authors tend to be one has to wonder whether they are reflecting our deepest thoughts or that they are merely using their imaginations creatively. Do authors try to paint a realistic picture to the reader by placing the reader in the scene of the crime? Or are authors just making an attempt to be as vile, disturbing and sensationalist as possible?
Please share with us your opinion on whether you think authors of crime fiction are CREATIVE or CRAZY. Give us an anecdotal account of a scene or novel that you have read in which you thought that the author was being genius or disgusting in relation to the main question above.

GROUP RESPONSES

Thembi: I think it is a bit of both, as much as they want to use their imaginations, they don't want to be unrealistic. In other words what the write and how they write it needs to relate to the reader, the reader needs to grasp it. So as much as they want to be creative their creativity is limited to their readers and perhaps their socialization as well. In other words they usually write about things/ideas/concepts they have heard or seen whilst growing up. In high school I read a novel in which the author was very descriptive with a particular injury scene. The

author described very explicitly how the scene looked like, that it felt like I was standing at the top of the slope observing the person at the bottom of the slope with the injury. I understood there and then that I could never be a doctor.

Melusi: There is a point in what you saying about being realistic Thembi. Although authors of crime novels (and any other genre I guess) are writing stories that are made up, a lot of research is put into most of these novels. Michael Connelly, the author of the *Lincoln Lawyer*, for instance, says that he would even go to a particular place i.e. restaurant, police station, etc. just to get a feel for the place. Robert Crais recalls witnessing a gang shoot-out in the middle of the day in LA whilst on patrol with cops. But guys have a look at this passage from Roger Smith's *Mixed Blood* and tell me what you think in light of the question. "Barnard humped his fat up a flight of stairs and into a cramped room. The air-conditioning was noisy, but it worked. First thing, he stripped and headed for the shower. There was no separate shower cubicle, just a curtain around the bathtub. It was difficult to manoeuvre his bulk in the tight space, and the spray from the nozzle was weak and tepid. But at least he was clean. He parted his butt cheeks and slathered on his ointment. The haemorrhoids had been playing up, aching like hell. He lumbered naked into the bedroom and took a plastic container of baby powder from the kit bag and rubbed it under his arms and between his thighs where the skin chafed when he walked. Then he dressed in jeans, T-shirt, and heavy boots. He sat on the bed, the springs compressing under his weight."

Dave: The story that scared me most was along came a spider an alex cross seies hw they found a dead body of a chill i thought it was crazy and wondered whether people could think of such things to write that made me reflect on society and hw things are happening in the real world

Melusi: I guess it is all about going to those dark areas in society that makes one cringe Dave. Crime fiction seeks to highlight these to us in a different way to the news where the story is quite bland, clinical and most importantly, there is no resolution. Authors take us into these worlds and we are fascinated by them, but ultimately, we do anticipate a solution or a satisfactory conclusion. So, the thing is whether they do this in some sort of way that captures real live situations because they do want us to remain interested.

Lindy: The fact that these authors can be so creative makes me believe that they have to be slightly crazy. if they weren't as vile and descriptive as they were, I don't think that the books would be as effective or have the same effect on us as the readers

Melusi: So Lindy, is it a matter of having some people living amongst us having these “crazy” ideas? Then are we as the readers also then slightly crazy to “enjoy” what the authors write about? And please people, I use “enjoy” very loosely.

Lindy: the crazy ideas that the authors that come up with have to come from some where, and they and I feel that I am slightly crazy for enjoying the topics that they come up with, it often leaves me wondering where the ideas come from. There is nothing wrong with being slightly crazy, and a lot of authors draw on ideas from things that have happened in reality, so who are the crazy ones, the authors or the ones that actually do psychotic things to actual people and not fictional characters?

Matthew: I think that these authors are both genuis and super crazy! They always manage to made the end so impossible to predict and yet they give it such a simple end. but as crazy as i think they are some they manage to combine their crazyness which a touch of reality. to see this check out the linchon lawyer please mind my creative spelling of the books title.

Vlad: definitely a mixture of creativity and insanity some authors have a perfect mixture of both and is why they are respected. Thomas Harris makes a great example of such an author in his Hannibal series much of which has been adapted into film. in Hannibal, Hardy uses wit and a bit of sadistic humour to describe the protagonist, Hannibal, who is a GENUIS serial killer who mutilates and often eats his victim. I refer specifically to a scene in the novel where a victim of the protagonist is forced to peel the skin of his face using a razor blade. What fascinates me about this scene is that the author has used Hannibal's intellect as a doctor in psychiatry to explain why the victim should mutilate himself. This for me is the making of a great crime fiction author.

Lynne: Crime fiction authors I believe are extremely creative, yeah crazy at times but that crazy is what makes the books sell so I'd say their crazy is creative. I cant exactly remember any specif scene were this was nicely portrayed

Leanne: The best crime fiction novels are usually a combination of both! I think a good incorporation of both is what keeps us intrigued and interested ... Without the creativity and intense descriptions, I doubt the same emotions that keep us reading would be evoked ...

John: I have to say its creativity, because most of the scenes that are extreme are funny and they do put the reader in the scene. like many scenes in 'Mixed Blood' are so gruesome you

want to puke when reading them, thats how real they become in your imagination. So they are creative

Member's (Allan) question:

Hey Everybody. I have quite a few friends who are passionate about Crime Fiction. I am keen to know more about the genre and perhaps get into it in the future? Won't you guys tell me what it is about this genre that fascinates you? I'm curious and interested. Enlighten me folks.

GROUP RESPONSES

Melusi: Blood, sweat and tears...and the most obscene sex scenes. lol

Cathy: Detective criminals and their motives

Leanne: Pure Thrill ...

Tony: I like crime scenes, and treachery, embezzlement and mystery to a certain level in certain plots, conflicts as well.But most of all I learn different lessons!!

Sally: Mostly the blood and the criminal element of it all...

Allan: So are Crime Fiction novels pretty much the same as Horror and Thriller movies? or are they different in certain ways?

Lindy: there is a difference, in horrors and thrillers no one really solves much and just gets killed. in these novels it is the process that the crime solvers go through to get the killer, but it does have aspects that horrors and thrillers use, if that makes any sense?

Allan: Oh I see so there is a satisfaction of getting to the end of a crime saga? there is a sense of completion?=)

Lindy: yea pretty much but I sometimes feel that the novel hasn't been completed even though it has ended. I sometimes feel that there could have been so much more

Melusi: The thrill of putting bits of pieces of information together in resolving a crime. Well put Lindy. I also enjoy being entertained by ideas of how the world would have been had law enforcers across the spectrum been as heroic, intellectual and resourced as characters in the novels.

Jasmyne: I love the fact that there is something to figure out, someone to understand and most of all the stories behind the story, it's all a mystery!

APPENDIX B1: TRANSCRIPT 1

The following interview transcript is based on the "Engaging with Crime Fiction as a Literary Practice" research study. As required by the Ethics Committee, the participant gave both verbal (audio recorded) as well as written permission to participate in the study. The participant requested that sections of the interview that reveal identity, or that the participant wishes not to occur, or that are not relevant to the research study's questions and/or objectives have been omitted. I as the researcher as well as the interviewer have noted all questions and responses relevant to the research study and for the purpose of being able to read clearly and coherently what was said, I have not recorded the pauses in speech or subtle alterations that the participant has made in mid speech e.g.:

Interviewer: Where do you live?

Participant (unedited response): Well, ahm, ahm, well, I … My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

Participant (edited response): My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

However, I should state for the record that the participant's words are not being substituted by synonyms and no phrases/words are being included in the participant's answers.

The participant's pseudonym is John and the participant is a 23-year-old black male student reading towards a B-Ed Bachelor of Education in English) degree in his final year of the programme.

Interviewer: How long have you been a reader of crime fiction novels?

John: I think it's been two years now.

Interviewer: Who or what made you to read crime fiction?

John: I bumped into a crime fiction book by incident when I was looking for books to read through the summer vacation. I didn't know at first that it was a crime fiction book I just picked it up and then I read the review and I found it interesting and I took it with. As soon as I started reading it that's when I discovered that it's crime fiction and ever since then, I've been reading.

Interviewer: Where did you get this book from?

John: I got this book from the university where I study (which is Wits of course) it was the English Applied Language Department.

Interviewer: Would this be at the outside shelves that they have there?

John: Yes, it was on one of the tables that they have on one of the corridors to lecturer's offices.

Interviewer: Can you remember the first crime novel you read?

John: Yes, I read a novel titled *Nine Dragons* by Michael Connelly.

Interviewer: How did you feel about it? Describe your thoughts and emotions.

John: While reading it I was very interested because it was a completely different kind of genre to me. It involved guns and police and stuff like that. So, I fell in love with the book five pages into the book because it seems like every page I turned revealed a certain mystery about the story that was beginning. So, it felt very interesting and it was quite a page turner. So, ever since the first five pages to the end of the book, it was just adrenalin all the way.

Interviewer: So, you had a lot of adrenalin? You were quite thrilled?

John: Yes, I remember I had to take about 45 to an hour after reading the first five pages and I felt … I wish I could just go and read it and stop running all these errands and just focus on the book. So it was very very interesting.

Interviewer: Where you experiencing a lot of emotions in terms of what you were reading? Were there times when you were surprised, shocked or pleased?

John: At first I was filled with suspense. I had this feeling of suspense like always waiting to learn what's gonna happen next.

Interviewer: Ever since that first novel, have you read a great deal more?

John: yeah, I have read quite a few. Because I am still new to the genre, I must say I'm finding more authors that I like. But my favourite author at the moment is the one I started with, Michael Connelly.

Interviewer: So you have read a great deal more, but mostly his works?

John: Yes, mostly his works.

Interviewer: Do you prefer reading local and/or international crime fiction novels? Why?

John: Well, I would say the answer to this question links to the first question before. Because the first author that I was introduced to was international, (meaning he was American), so, I feel more comfortable reading American authors than local authors. I think for local authors I've only read one.

Interviewer: Is this the only reason why you think you prefer international authors just because you were introduced to an international author at first or do think there is another reason? Now you can compare, can't you?

John: Well I think it's because with a local author most times the places and events they refer to are quite familiar, so, I've realised that the suspense and the thrill is not as great as when I get to learn about places that I do not know. Because, for instance, with the author that I read, Michael Connelly, I can tell you that I have never been to LA but I have a picture of how LA is unlike when I read a local author they talk about Cape Town. I have a clear idea where Cape Town is, what it looks like, what happens there. So, half of the suspense is covered I guess.

Interviewer: So, for you, part of the suspense is discovering a new environment?

John: Yes, a new environment and new events. Because most of the novels I have read are detective novels you even learn about the different law enforcement systems and structures, so it goes even beyond the environment.

Interviewer: You feel that if you read a local book you are familiar, so you deal with the plot of the story?

John: Yes, your only focus is the plot of the story and the characters.

Interviewer: So for you the setting is an integral part of the whole suspense journey?

John: Yeah.

Interviewer: Would you say that you enjoy crime fiction?

John: Yes I do. I do enjoy crime fiction. I have to say that prior to crime fiction I used to read biographies and things like that. Ever since reading crime fiction, I've discovered that this is more interesting.

Interviewer: The reason why I use the word enjoy is because I want to understand whether you enjoy reading about dead bodies (if there are any dead bodies)? Basing it on your favourite author, can you explain why you say you enjoy such books?

John: It's not about the dead bodies. For me it's on the investigation process, how the character comes to the conclusion of a case and how he collects facts and information. The question process. I feel as though I am part of that process.

Interviewer: So you saying it is not necessarily the action?

John: Well, the action is part of it because I guess the action is what triggers the thrill. Because, for the character to even start the inquiry it is because of the action that happens before.

Interviewer: Do you think that crime novels give you as a reader a good idea of present day issues?

John: Yes, I would say. It deals with not only crime but also looks at the state of people's thinking and law enforcement structures and how they operate presently and how that operation serves the purpose of the structure.

Interview: In terms of other social issues, do you think the genre covers those?

John: Yah, issues such as drugs, poverty, crime.

Interviewer: Are these issues real to you?

John: Yeah, they quite real because I've noticed that they quite universal issues and as I said, part of why I read international novels rather than local is because of the unfamiliarity of everything. So now, when I get to learn about the social issues, I start broadening my thinking as far as the issues are concerned because I now think … oh, so this also happens maybe in LA or NY. So these are quite universal issues so my country is not the only place that is facing such issues.

Interviewer: Are there any issues that stand out for you or that you are hoping an author will write about, or is it all about entertainment?

John: I wouldn't say there are any at the moment. For now I feel as though I am just familiarising myself with the genre and I can say that mostly it is all about entertainment at the moment.

Interviewer: So you want the entertainment to bring the issues to you?

John: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you consider reading crime novels a literary experience? Why?

John: Yes, because I consider everything that is written literature because any piece of writing that is out there is meant to serve a certain purpose. So that's why I believe that it's literature.

Interviewer: When you say "any piece of writing", can you elaborate on that? Because a text on Facebook is that literature or literacy?

John: That's literacy. By piece of writing I mean your things such as newspapers, magazines and all the genres of novels.

Interviewer: So I assume crime fiction will fall under that?

John: Yes.

Interviewer: How does your experience of reading crime fiction compare to other books that you might have read or that you still do read?

John: I might be biased but crime fiction for me is more broad and more informative so unlike, for instance biographies, that focus on only a certain number of events and its main focus is this one person or character and everything revolves around them. Unlike with crime fiction, as much as you have the lead character, there'll also be these other facets that also tie it to the story.

Interviewer: But do you acknowledge that it's got to do with technique of writing then actually the genre itself? So it depends on the author whether he/she wants to write a first-person narrative or a third-person narrative.

John: I would say it depends on the style of writing, but mostly, biographies are written in first-person.

Interviewer: And so are some crime books too.

John: Yah, maybe I've not been exposed to much then. But crime fiction I've realised that the author is able to shift between two perspectives, first-person and third-person.

Interviewer: What about any other genre? Do you read African literature?

John: yeah I do read African literature.

Interviewer: How does it compare to that?

John: African literature most times I read fiction, so, it's more mystical because it's fiction. So, although it will have aspects that are familiar, particularly South African literature.

Interviewer: But would you then say you don't have a good idea of the issues that are happening in society because you said that's one of the distinguishing factors of crime fiction for you?

John: Do you mean for …

Interviewer: Yah, African literature. Does the same distinguishing factor count here when you talk about African literature versus crime fiction?

John: Yah, it counts, but not as much. Because, half of the issues are things that I'm exposed to through media and interaction with people.

Interviewer: For what is this now? Social issues under crime fiction or African literature?

John: Under African literature.

Interviewer: But African literature also deals with crime though or social issues?

John: Yeah it does but as I'm saying most of the things are things I'm quite aware of the media and interactions with the people.

Interviewer: If you say that you're quite familiar with these issues, aren't you aware of issues written about in crime fiction? So aren't these issues highlighted in the media?

John: They are but for me not a great spectrum because the context is different.

Interviewer: So do you feel that crime fiction adds more depth to the issues?

John: yes it adds more depth because it focuses on a certain aspect or social issue. For instance, you may read a book and it focuses on drugs or prostitution or murder or any other crime.

Interviewer: If you watch a documentary on prostitution, won't that documentary be in-depth as well, versus a crime fiction book?

John: Well, it will be quite extensive, but a crime fiction book has a way of presenting the issue and finding its way around it that is different from a documentary.

John: So you are saying that a crime fiction book deals with the issue?

John: Yeah, because, if you watch a documentary about prostitution it will give you only inside information, but it won't tell then what happens after that.

Interview: So you want the resolution? You want the solution to the problem?

John: yes.

Interviewer: And crime fiction gives you that solution?

John: Crime fiction does because you'd find that a book deals with prostitution; yes it will give you inside information about prostitutes and how they operate and maybe how a certain character died, and then now, we try and figure out the reasons that led to this character dying, and you'd find that, in as much as it is related to prostitution, it's in more depth and involves all sorts of aspects.

Interviewer: Which from the three South African novels that were selected for this research study did you read?

John: I read *Mixed Blood*. [Roger Smith's novel]

Interviewer: Could you relate to the novel/s? For either yes or no give a reason?

John: Yes I could. It was quite interesting and its main focus was Cape Town and I'm quite familiar with what happens in Cape Town particularly the Cape Flats. So, it affirmed the information I had about the place because you know that media can sometimes distort certain information or misrepresent places. So now, the Cape Flats, I got more information of what goes on there and it confirmed the media information I have of the place. It also highlighted issues quite differently and it looked at particularly the law enforcement, and it also looked at

the issue of a foreign national being in the country and the reasons why some foreign nationals end up in the country. It actually opened my eyes.

Interviewer: Do you think that the author has captured the essence of South Africa's crime reality as you understand it?

John: Yes he did and he also gave a bit more than what I understood or knew.

Interviewer: Tell me more.

John: I didn't know that in South Africa we have people who can actually investigate the police force and ensure that they don't engage in any crime; taking into consideration that many law enforcement personnel engage in crime lately. I always thought these people can do whatever that they feel like simply because there's no one who is in charge or there's no one holding them accountable. So to learn that there is a structure that performs that duty was quite an eye-opener and quite informative.

Interviewer: What was your favourite part of the book and why?

John: There are a lot of parts that were my favourite. The part where the foreigner kills the people that broke into his house, that's where it all started for me because I was part of this person who was on the run, always on the lookout. But there are many aspects of the novels that were interesting. [interviewee is referring to the opening scene of the novel where Jack Burn's home is invited by two gangsters called Rikki and Faried)

Interviewer: Did you feel that you part of the adventure, the action?

John: I felt as though I am part of the adventure although there are parts I would step out and would be receiving information.

Interviewer: What did you not like about the book? Why?

John: At the moment I can't say because I looked at what was good rather than what is bad. When I started reading, I made up my mind that I am not going to compare this book with what I've read so far, international.

Interviewer: Why not?

John: I felt that it wouldn't be fair. I better judge the book on what it is rather than my expectations.

Interviewer: Let's do that now.

John: The authors are good in their own right because at the end of the books I have the same feeling.

Interviewer: Which is?

John: I question where the book ends. Who ended up where? Why did he end up there? Why did this happen instead of that? So both serve their purpose which for me is like the cherry on the cake.

Interviewer: But why do you want to be left with questions at the end of an investigation?

John: There is a conclusion of course of the main issue, but there are these other issues.

Interviewer: Are these issues of morality or what issues are these?

John: These are more issues of, I wish I knew more about so and so. How did he end? For instance, in Mixed Blood, I ask myself, why did the American national have to die like that? Why weren't we at least shown that he got to his destination and what transpired. [interviewing is referring to the end scene when Jack Burn flees from the authorities and his family]

Interviewer: Why do you want a criminal to get away?

John: Not necessarily that I want a criminal to get away, but the way the story was unfolding you didn't expect him to die. I remember when I read my first book when the main character's wife got shot and killed. It happened at a very unexpected time. So when it happened it was still three chapters to the end, I paused and started thinking why though did she have to die? Why here? Why now? This is quite unexpected.

Interviewer: Don't you think in those contexts the authors were trying to highlight how unexpected death is?

John: Yah, it is also that but you know that death comes at any time you cannot put it in a box and say it can only happen here. But it is also for suspense I guess.

Interviewer: Would you like for these questions to get answered though or are these questions that you content with or at some point in time if you were given the chance to speak to the author you would ask him those questions?

John: Yeah… Most times I feel almost all the crime fiction novels I've read there needs to be a sequel.

Interviewer: What do you make of the conclusion? Was the ending to your satisfaction?

John: I could never say an ending to a book was satisfactory. You end up thinking, why did this happen? Why did that happen? I end up thinking, why did we have to end it here because we could still continue.

Interviewer: Apart from the obvious resolving of a crime, were there any other resolutions that you took note of or that you would have like to see?

John: Yeah, there were quite a few that I took note of. What I like about crime fiction is that it highlights different issues all at once. It focuses on the actual crime and some aspect, like for instance, in *Mixed Blood* I got to learn about how fate can at times be in such a way it heals whatever heartache and the importance of letting go of a certain issue or a certain ideology.

Interviewer: How were women and black people portrayed for you?

John: For me this particular book highlighted all different types of personality within people of colour. I was quite surprised and amazed that the person from the ICD was black. Most times you'd think that these just positions for the big boers. Tables were turned because he was responsible for a white guy other than it happening the other way around. There were also times when black people were portrayed as ordinary like you would expect for instance the waitresses at the restaurant. [interviewee is referring to Zondi, the official sent from the police ministry]

Interviewer: But they weren't black. They were coloured. Didn't they make that distinction between themselves and black people? [interviewer is referring to the two colourd waitresses who had a discussion about black people having a superiority complex and that it would be better to work for a white boss]

John: They did, but personally, I regard them as people of colour, but then I would say it is a different aspect of people of colour.

Interviewer: How do you think the author dealt with that depiction? Was he being stereotypical or was he touching upon the issue?

John: He was being genuine about it, not being stereotypical.

Interviewer: He didn't sensationalise it?

John: Yah, he was just being genuine, keeping it real. That is why nothing that transpired as far as that is concerned amazed me. The incident at the restaurant, I was like, oh well, what else can you expect? This does happen. It didn't leave me questioning whether this went too far or this is just biased and stereotypical. But it left me content; that well, this is how it is. He nailed it.

Interviewer: So, you talking about Zondi and the two waitresses? Is that the scene you talking about where the one tells the other one that she heard on the radio that God was black?

John: Yah, because this are things that happen in our communities and within the media sometimes.

Interviewer: In terms of the role of women, how do you think he dealt with that?

John: There I would say it was unfair because he only focused on women as these average kind a people.

Interviewer: What about Susan, Jack's wife?

John: She's also what you expect, an ordinary woman. Because I can remember at the beginning of the book, there's a point where he describes her physical state … that she was pregnant. [interviewee is referring to how Susan, Jack Burn's wife, was described when their home was being invaded by the two gangsters]

Interviewer: He weakened her you feel?

John Yah… And when you look at the woman whose son died, burned by Barnard, still, in as much as in the beginning she appeared as a strong adamant woman that is what you would expect from a single mother. But the breakdown conformed to the stereotypical woman.

Interview concluded.

APPENDIX B2: TRANSCRIPT 2

The following interview transcript is based on the "Engaging with Crime Fiction as a Literary Practice" research study. As required by the Ethics Committee the participant gave both verbal (audio recorded) as well as written permission to participate in the study. The participant requested that sections of the interview that reveal identity, or that the participant wishes not to occur, or that are not relevant to the research study's questions and/or objectives have been omitted. I as the researcher as well as the interviewer have noted all questions and responses relevant to the research study and for the purpose of being able to read clearly and coherently what was said, I have not recorded the pauses in speech or subtle alterations that the participant has made in mid speech e.g.:

Interviewer: Where do you live?

Participant (unedited response): Well, ahm, ahm, well, I … My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

Participant (edited response): My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

However, I should state for the record that the participant's words are not being substituted by synonyms and no phrases/words are being included in the participant's answers.

The participant's pseudonym is Sally and the participant is a 21-year-old black female reading towards a BA (Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Psychology) degree in her final year of the programme.

Interviewer: How long have you been a reader of crime fiction novels?

Sally: I started when I was about twelve.

Interviewer: Who or what made you to read crime fiction?

Sally: My grandmother.

Interviewer: Are you guys a family of readers?

Sally: Me and my grandmother are the ones that actually read and I wasn't actually big on playing outside, so that is why I actually read.

Interviewer: For a black woman I am quite surprised, where did she get this collection of books?

Sally: She bought them but I don't know what influenced her. And besides, she wasn't well-off. My grandmother was a domestic worker, but she has libraries of these books

Interviewer: Can you remember the first crime novel you read?

Sally: It was either Mary Higgins-Clark or Agatha Christie. One of them because those are my first crime books and after that I read everything that they had written.

Interviewer: How did you feel about it? Describe your thoughts and emotions.

Sally: I understood the words but I didn't understand the concepts. When I read them now I understand what's happening then, I read them and I was kind a like 'okay'. Here and there you could tell what was happening, so it was basically just patch work.

Interviewer: But how did you feel though, not as a twelve year old, but when you understood what you were reading?

Sally: It was exciting. It was immersing yourself in a book and you would feel what the characters are feeling. Your emotions go as they go. When someone gets killed, it's shock, when they catch the killer, its happiness.

Interviewer: Do you prefer reading local and/or international crime fiction novels? Why?

Sally: Definitely international. Those are the ones I grew up with. I'm used to the writing style and discovering faraway places. Not local because I feel like I walk through that every day so why would I have to read a book about it?

Interviewer: So you find these local books quite mundane?

Sally: It depends which one, but generally I would not go for a local book.

Interviewer: Would you say that you "enjoy" crime fiction? Explain.

Sally: Yes, very much so. I enjoy crime fiction because there's the thrill. When you reading a book you wanna be in the moment with it and you wanna feel the same emotions that the author was feeling at the time or what they want you to feel. So I like that. And I like the fact that it is sort of like a puzzle. Here and there is a red herring that moves you the other way but

down the line you feel like it's not this guy. So it's like a constant puzzle which engages your mind.

Interviewer: Would you say you enjoy the murders?

Sally: Yes. I quite enjoy gruesome scenes.

Interviewer: Why do you think you enjoy the murders?

Sally: Because I like gruesome things. So the more in-depth and gruesome the murder is, the more it's gonna captivate me.

Interviewer: How come does it appeal to you to read about blood and someone getting killed?

Sally: I don't know, but generally I like that sort of stuff like my favourite genre in movies is horrors.

Interviewer: Do you like the resolving of the puzzle?

Sally: I like the resolving of the puzzle, not so much the catching of the bad guy as 'wow this guy is getting acknowledged for his work'. So for me it is not so much catching the bad guy, it's more a case of 'wow this is your handy work, now everybody is gonna know it's you'. The more articulate/skilful the murder is the more I feel you need recognition.

Interviewer: But that enjoyment comes through you solving the puzzle?

Sally: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think that crime novels give you as a reader a good idea of present day issues?

Sally: Yes and no, I think it depends where you from. There is a general theme of crime in it, but from a South African point of view you could say that is nothing new or it happens in a different way. So it does give you everyday type of issues but you have a different local understanding to it.

Interviewer: Are there any issues that stand out for you or that you are hoping an author will write about, or is it all about entertainment?

Sally: Quite a few authors have written about the role of women in the police or serials because you never find a woman serial killer. It's always the black widow where she lost it or

it was a crime of passion. You get them now but generally there is still a lack. It is very male dominated.

Interviewer: You have to look for them?

Sally: Exactly. It is a very male sort of thing, but when you find a woman that is strong as a woman you relate to that and it is sort of empowering.

Interviewer: So those are the kind of issues you are hoping get covered? Women issues?

Sally: Yah, gender empowerment and all of that.

Interviewer: And have you been finding these?

Sally: Sort of. I only find it in Patricia Cornwell books, either than that not much.

Interviewer: Why do you think you want these kinds of books? Can I stereotype you and say it is because you're a woman?

Sally: Yes, but it is redundant to read about the hero that's male and white. And middle aged and all that. Give me the black female chick that solves crime at night or whatever.

Interviewer: It is not for the issues, you read it for the entertainment?

Sally: Yah, generally I read it for entertainment because academics are enough.

Interviewer: Do you think about the issues?

Sally: Not reflect about them. It just one of those things where an issue comes up and you think, 'hey that's a really good point' then you move out.

Interviewer: Do you consider reading crime novels a literary experience? Why?

Sally: Not really. It's popular culture to me because you have this promotion 'here's this book' and I don't know, it's made up type of thing. It's a case of its fiction in the truer sense of the word. So you know that it's made up and you know that it's probably not true and it's written in such a way that it is entertaining and captivating, but you don't think about it.

Interviewer: So you don't consider that your literature experience?

Sally: No because for me, and I know that this is stereotypical, literature is 16^{th}-18^{th} century type of thing.

Interviewer: But that's also fiction?

Sally: That is, however, the way it's written.

Interviewer: So for you it's about the language? So language makes literature for you?

Sally: yes basically.

Interviewer: So if it is all posh then you like it?

Sally: If it is very English and proper?

Interviewer: Hmm.

Sally: No then I probably would not read it.

Interviewer: but didn't you just say that for you to have a literary experience you have to engage in intense reading?

Sally: Exactly. But that's also the case, when I read a novel I want to read it for entertainment not for literature. So if it was literature in the true sense of the word, where it was not too much engaging, but to think and reflect about issues then I would not read it.

Interviewer: So what is it about then? Is it about the language or about the issues?

Sally: The language mainly. It's like reading great authors.

Interviewer: So, if you were reading another genre, would you say it's about the language? That's what makes it literature?

Sally: Yes that would still apply but if it was any other book except crime fiction, then I wouldn't mind the language.

Interviewer: How does your experience of reading crime fiction compare to other books that you might have read or that you still do read?

Sally: I generally read the classics 18th-20th century. The one I'm currently reading is African literature. It is more tasking in that with crime fiction you don't have to think about it. The plot unravels and the writing is easy, here and there you get confused but it all comes together. With literature it's a case of, you always have to be fully attentive.

Interviewer: Which from the three South African novels that were selected for this research study did you read?

Sally: *Mixed Blood*

Interviewer: Could you relate to the novel? For either yes or no give a reason?

Sally: Yah… Being a South African and being exposed to crime so much it's refreshing to see someone articulate it in a way that isn't American. It's local, even the characters are local the experience, everything is something that I as South African would experience because they talk about life on the poverty side.

Interviewer: And as a woman?

Sally: I didn't like the way the book portrayed all women actually. There's a sense they are all meek. What is the main characters name?

Interviewer: Jack Burn.

Sally: Yes, his wife there's a damsel in distress feel that you get from her. Even though she tries to assert herself because she's so tired of all his things, but it's in a meek 'I'm reliant on you … tell me what to do' type of way. With Carmen it's still the meek … her husband abused her or her dad also molested her. So it's the sense like you can't stand up and even when you do stand-up it's in a dependency sort of way.

Interviewer: What about the time she sees her dad, after she confronts him and where she walks out and she looks towards the sky, how did you feel about that? Did you find it liberating or cliché? [interviewer is referring to one of the end scenes where Carmen confronts her father that used to abuse her as a child]

Sally: It was cliché but for her in knowing her character and all she's been through. It was long time coming, but the minute she does it's liberating because knowing her. Had it been any other book or character that wasn't her, it would have been cliché, but for her that must have taken a lot and it took such a long time to get to that point.

Interviewer: So as a woman you feel that he failed to deal with woman issues in an upbeat positive way?

Sally: Yes. Stereotypical.

Interviewer: Do you think that the author have captured the essence of South Africa's crime reality as you understand it?

Sally: Yes, well, where I live, what I have experienced, is quite different from that but you are faced by these issues everyday on television. Although you see them you don't get the personal subjective story, but when you read his book you start to understand because for you it's only news. He immerses you in their reality so much that you start understanding what it's like and relating even though your life is far from that.

Interviewer: What was your favourite part of the book and why?

Sally: I want to say when they set Gatsby alight but I didn't actually enjoy that. That was a really nice thing but it wasn't the highlight. I kind a like the security-guard and his moments. There is something very solitary. For me I could relate to his solitary character. So my favourite part of that would be the torture. [the interviewee is referring to the time when Bennie Mongrel was assisting Jack Burn to track down is kidnapped son. Mongrel was torturing Barnard for that reason but also because Barnard had killed his dog.]

Interviewer: Did you find some kind of restoration in that?

Sally: Not really. It's more a case of I've got my motives, but then I'm helping you. So, for someone that has been that lonely without friends and without a reason for living, taking retribution like that (for the killing of his dog) and helping him, it's comforting moments.

Interviewer: What did you not like about the book? Why?

Sally: I think it's portrayal of women and the black guy in the book was really, really stereotypical.

Interviewer: Tell me about the race thing?

Sally: There's this understanding of the sexualised black man. That's how it came across to me.

Interviewer: What about the fact that Zondi is brought in to bring in order, is that stereotypical?

Sally: No, I like the fact that his incorruptible, but there is something very stereotypically black about his character.

Interviewer: You can't point this out?

Sally: I think it's the whole sexualised black man thing. The insatiable appetite, because I was doing a course on sexuality, so I think that's why it stood out.

Interviewer: And the other race issues? What do you make of the restaurant scene where Zondi has overstayed his welcome?]interviewer is referring to a scene where Zondi was at a restaurant and it was past closing time. Two colourd waitresses where not happy about that and they had a discussion about Zondi probably feeling entitled and having a superiority complex.]

Sally: That is typical South Africa. So it didn't stand out. I did not look at it in terms of the races that were involved or the particulars, it's sort of the intolerance that still happens in South Africa.

Interviewer: What do you make of the conclusion? Was the ending to your satisfaction?

Sally: I actually like it a lot. Jack was a good guy turned bad turned good turned bad again, so, after all of that, I like the fact that he got to pay for what he did because after all that has happened you'd think he's the underdog and he would ride of to the sunset because now he's the guy that killed bad guys. But I wasn't forgetting the fact that he did bad things and most that happened in the book is his fault. [interviewee is stating that she is content with Burn's accident at the end even though he had played a roll in Barnard's demise.]

Interviewer: But don't you think the fact that he lost his wife and child was enough?

Sally: No. I just like the fact that everybody got to pay, I mean she even is gonna get trialled somewhere.

Interviewer: So you were content with the way Smith summed it all up?

Sally: Yes, I really was.

Interviewer: Apart from the obvious resolving of a crime, were there any other resolutions that you took note of or that you would have like to see?

Sally: Everybody resolved whatever conflict they started with.

Interviewer: So there was no other additional resolutions you would have liked to see?

Sally: I would have like to see where Carmen ended up because the scene ends with her just looking up at the sky. Now she doesn't have a husband, she doesn't have a son, she doesn't have any money, so shouldn't he have expanded on that a little?

Interviewer: Isn't she feeling free from her past she is free from everything that has happened to her, now she is looking forward?

Sally: Yes definitely, but you need to look forward with some sort of plan in mind seeing that she almost has nothing, only the clothes on her back.

Interview concluded.

APPENDIX B3: TRANSCRIPT 3

The following interview transcript is based on the "Engaging with Crime Fiction as a Literary Practice" research study. As required by the Ethics Committee the participant gave both verbal (audio recorded) as well as written permission to participate in the study. The participant requested that sections of the interview that revealidentity, or that the participant wishes not to occur, or that are not relevant to the research study's questions and/or objectives have been omitted. I as the researcher as well as the interviewer have noted all questions and responses relevant to the research study and for the purpose of being able to read clearly and coherently what was said, I have not recorded the pauses in speech or subtle alterations that the participant has made in mid speech e.g.:

Interviewer: Where do you live?

Participant (unedited response): Well, ahm, ahm, well, I … My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

Participant (edited response): My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

However, I should state for the record that the participant's words are not being substituted by synonyms and no phrases/words are being included in the participant's answers.

The participant's pseudonym is Thembi and the participant is a 22 year old black female reading towards a BA (Bachelor of Arts in International Relations, Politics and Media) degree in her final year of the programme.

Interviewer: How long have you been a reader of crime fiction novels?

Thembi: A few months.

Interviewer: Who or what made you to read crime fiction?

Thembi: You suggested it to me, so I started then.

Interviewer: Can you remember the first crime novel you read?

Thembi: It was First to Die by James Patterson.

Interviewer: How did you feel about it? Describe your thoughts and emotions.

Thembi: I liked it a lot. I got hooked I guess. I felt like I want more. While reading the book I just wanted to know what was gonna happen next and at the end of the book I felt like it was a little incomplete.

Interviewer: Do you prefer reading local and/or international crime fiction novels? Why?

Thembi: I think local because I can relate more to it.

Interviewer: How do you relate more to it?

Thembi: I feel like I have a better geographical understanding of it.

Interviewer: Would you say that you 'enjoy' crime fiction? Explain.

Thembi: Yes I do.

Interviewer: How come?

Thembi: I don't know. Maybe because I enjoy action movies in general, so I enjoy them too. But what I love about them is that they also have an aspect of reality in them.

Interviewer: Is this the primary reason why you say you enjoy crime fiction?

Thembi: I like mystery as well, so I guess that plays a role in it.

Interviewer: So do you enjoy the whole experience of solving or crime or being part of the process?

Thembi: Yes, I think being part of the process and the crime in general.

Interviewer: Do you think that crime novels give you as a reader a good idea of present day issues?

Thembi: I think it will depend like I said I relate more to local ones than I do to international ones. So, local ones yes. I feel like its bringing an aspect of reality, but the international ones I feel like they more fictional.

Interviewer: Are there any issues that stand out for you or that you are hoping an author will write about, or is it all about entertainment?

Thembi: Yes I think so. Modern day corruption because the one I read was about corruption during the apartheid years. I feel like a novel based on current ANC corruption.

Interviewer: As a woman?

Thembi: Oh yes, to put more women into the book because in Blood Safari, Emma was poor at the end, she was just being a character. She didn't play a big role in the unveiling of the crime. I feel like she could have played a bigger role or we could have another woman playing a leading role.

Interviewer: But then, is about the issues or is it all about entertainment when you reading these books?

Thembi: I think it makes better sense and I understand better when it is pointing to issues that I'm aware of as much as it is entertaining at the same time.

Interviewer: But you are saying that it is better if it's got the issues, that makes it more entertaining for you?

Thembi: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you consider reading crime novels a literary experience? Why?

Thembi: Yes I do think it's literature it's just a different genre.

Interviewer: Why so?

Thembi: I think I consider any book literature.

Interviewer: How does your experience of reading crime fiction compare to other books that you might have read or that you still do read?

Thembi: I think crime fiction has more suspense than other genres like romance.

Interviewer: Is there a thrill reading a crime fiction versus an adventure novel?

Thembi: Yes, I think a crime fiction novel is more thrilling than an adventure novel, but then there is a very thin line between the two.

Interviewer: You read *Blood Safari* by Deon Meyer right?

Thembi: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you relate to the novel and are there any other reasons than it being a local novel and you having geographical understanding?

Thembi: Yes, the socio-economic aspect to it. Because, when you look at it the black people played the gate guard and the other the police officer. The white people were the land owners, the business people, there were game rangers, it is depicting how our country is right now.

Interviewer: Do you think that the author has captured the essence of South Africa's crime reality as you understand it?

Thembi: I think he has. He has interpreted pretty well.

Interviewer: He was working with the issue of black people using the vultures for "muti" and white people wanting to preserve nature, do you think that is accurate? Do you think that is one of the crimes that we South Africans are struggling with?

Thembi: I think it is, but it depends where you live because it's not that relevant if you living in Gauteng, and if you living in a rural place like the Kruger it is more relevant.

Interviewer: What was your favourite part of the book and why?

Thembi: The shooting where Emma and Lemmer got attacked on their way back from somewhere, I think that changed the whole book basically because in the beginning it dragged on and the story didn't make sense. [interviewee is referring to a scene where Emma and Lemmer were ambushed by assassins while they were still looking for her brother in Mpumalanga. This incident led to Emma's hospitalisation.]

Interviewer: What did you not like about the book? Why?

Thembi: When they were sending Emma and Lemmer back and forth at the Kruger. It was dragging.

Interviewer: What do you make of the conclusion? Was the ending to your satisfaction?

Thembi: No, I am one of those people when I read a book or watching a movie I need a proper conclusion. I felt like it left me to my imagination.

Interviewer: So for you, the resolving of a crime was not satisfying?

Thembi: Yes it wasn't. What happened was that Lemmer is reading the conclusion in a newspaper and it's very summarised. [interviewee is referring to a scene where Lemmer is reading a news article about a hijacking that led to the death of Quintus Wernich, chairman of

the board of Southern Cross Avionics, who had been the person responsible for Emma's brother's disappearance.]

Interviewer: What about the part where he kills the people who are after Emma? [interviewer is referring to the time when Lemmer kills the assassins that where sent by Wernich.]

Thembi: Remember the people that he kills, they were send by somebody else and then he went to Stellenbosch to see the boss and somebody else ends up killing the boss. So I felt like that was incomplete.

Interviewer: So you felt like the slaying of the head was the actual conclusion? That's where the crime gets resolved?

Thembi: Yes.

Interviewer: Apart from the obvious resolving of a crime, were there any other resolutions that you took note of or that you would have like to see?

Thembi: I definitely would have liked to see what happened to Emma and Lemmer in a way.

Interviewer: So you feel like on a personal level there was a conclusion missing there?

Thembi: Yes.

Interviewer: Any other characters that you feel Meyer did not give a conclusion too? It can be emotional.

Thembi: Cobie, I felt like he could have told that story to Emma he told to Lemmer and there could have been an apology.

Interviewer: As a woman how do you feel about Emma's character?

Thembi: I don't feel like I related at all. Sometimes I felt like she was naïve. At some point I felt like she was weak. She wasn't my favourite character.

Interviewer: Elaborate more on that.

Thembi: Initially the story was hers but then towards the end she wasn't part of the conclusion. She could have played a bigger part.

Interviewer: Do you think a woman body-guard would have been just as good?

Thembi: No, because there would not been a romance part.

Interviewer: What about a same sex relationship?

Thembi: I guess it could have worked. I never thought of it like that.

Interviewer: So you think Meyer used the male character for romance?

Thembi: Yes.

Interviewer: So do you think a female body-guard would have done as good a job as Lemmer?

Thembi: Yes.

Interviewer: Why so?

Thembi: I think a woman would have been capable to do the things that he did in the book and maybe even more rational.

Interviewer: Can you think of an instant when Lemmer lacked rational thought?

Thembi: Yes, before the attack. The way he approached everyone, he was very hostile.

Interviewer: As a black woman, how do you feel?

Thembi: Like I said, I felt that he interpreted South Africa's socio-economic quite well.

Interview concluded.

APPENDIX B4: TRANSCRIPT 4

The following interview transcript is based on the "Engaging with Crime Fiction as a Literary Practice" research study. As required by the Ethics Committee the participant gave both verbal (audio recorded) as well as written permission to participate in the study. The participant requested that sections of the interview that reveal identity, or that the participant wishes not to occur, or that are not relevant to the research study's questions and/or objectives have been omitted. I as the researcher as well as the interviewer have noted all questions and responses relevant to the research study and for the purpose of being able to read clearly and coherently what was said, I have not recorded the pauses in speech or subtle alterations that the participant has made in mid speech e.g.:

Interviewer: Where do you live?

Participant (unedited response): Well, ahm, ahm, well, I … My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

Participant (edited response): My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

However, I should state for the record that the participant's words are not being substituted by synonyms and no phrases/words are being included in the participant's answers.

The participant's pseudonym is Sam and the participant is a 29-year-old black female reading towards a B-Ed (Bachelor of Education in Mathematics) degree in her third year of the programme.

Interviewer: How long have you been a reader of crime fiction novels?

Sam: I think this is the third year now.

Interviewer: Who or what made you to read crime fiction?

Sam: The course that I am doing, Education, we have the New Literacy course and they encouraged us to read. Firstly, I just read because they wanted us to read and we had assignments and then I got interested in this.

Interviewer: Did they force you guys to read? What happened?

Sam: I think they were forcing us because we had assignments to submit. We had to write what we have read in their blog for exam equivalents.

Interviewer: And how did you feel about that?

Sam: I didn't know what to read, I didn't know what interested me. I remember asking you one day for any book that you had and then you gave me Michael Connelly's books then I got interested there. I read something else but it got so boring they were talking about animals, but it was so boring.

Interviewer: Can you remember the first crime novel you read?

Sam: The Reversal.

Interviewer: How did you feel about it? Describe your thoughts and emotions.

Sam: You know, when I was reading at that time I didn't have a computer, I was reading at the computer lab –it's far from res. So when I was reading I would get scared, I would imagine things happening there, I just thought I would be going through the dark.

Interviewer: So you felt like you were having the same experiences as the characters?

Sam: Yes.

Interviewer: But was it a nice experience?

Sam: It was a nice experience because I got addicted. I would read a book in three to four days not sleeping and sometimes I would forget my assignments.

Interviewer: Ever since that first novel, have you read a great deal more? For either yes or no explain.

Sam: After reading the Michael Connelly books, I just searched for the others on the internet, but you know these assignments, but when I was free I would read.

Interviewer: Do you prefer reading local and/or international crime fiction novels? Why?

Sam: I don't know. It was the first time reading a South African novel. This South African one was more exciting because the places they were talking about were familiar and the history.

Interviewer: Would you say that you 'enjoy' crime fiction? Explain.

Sam: A lot.

Interviewer: So do you enjoy reading about dead bodies and blood?

Sam: Yes and where there's action.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Sam: Maybe it's because it is moving my emotions somehow.

Interviewer: If you enjoy reading about gun fights, dead bodies and those type of things, why don't you take a newspaper then?

Sam: The news don't explain very well the action. Experiencing the scene is very exciting.

Interviewer: Would you say there is a difference reading a news article on crime and reading a crime novel?

Sam: I think there is. The novel is detailed and the newspaper article is not. It's better to get the feel for what's happening.

Interviewer: But there is something that makes you go to a book instead of listening to radio. What does the book have that the news does not have?

Sam: Sometimes the suspense.

Interviewer: What normally happens at the end of a crime book?

Sam: You ask yourself some questions. You want to know what happened. Sometimes it is a happy ending.

Interviewer: Could that be the reason why you prefer reading a crime novel versus a news article?

Sam: Yes, because at the end of a newspaper article you have these boring discussions on what someone said.

Interviewer: Do you think that crime novels give you as a reader a good idea of present day issues?

Sam: It does, especially the one I read now.

Interviewer: Which issues do you think come through?

Sam: In the one I read I didn't know there were white people who didn't want to participate in apartheid. And these land fightings.

Interviewer: But do you read crime fiction for the issues or for the entertainment or both?

Sam: Entertainment.

Interviewer: Do you consider reading crime novels a literary experience? Why?

Sam: I didn't think of that. I was reading for the entertainment. Yes.

Interviewer: Why do you say so?

Sam: According to literature you have learnt some things about how the story should be, the characters and everything. Even the words.

Interviewer: So you consider that a literary experience?

Sam: Yes.

Interviewer: How does your experience of reading crime fiction compare to other books that you might have read or that you still do read?

Sam: It's more entertaining. The other ones are so serious.

Interviewer: But what makes you think crime fiction is not serious?

Sam: It's fun.

Interviewer: Which from the three South African novels that were selected for this research study did you read?

Sam: *Blood Safari*.

Interviewer: Could you relate to the novel/s? For either yes or no give a reason?

Sam: I could. Because I know about the game reserves, the places nearby and the apartheid era. But for the land, I just thought it was political but the time I read it, it got interesting.

Interviewer: As a woman, how did you relate to it?

Sam: You know that woman is strong. If I was Emma I wouldn't go that far to look for my brother.

Interviewer: Why do you think she is strong?

Sam: Because she gets those threats but she doesn't give up.

Interviewer: But how do you feel about the fact that Deon Meyer gave Emma a male body-guard?

Sam: I still feel that men are competent in this job, they are strategic, they won't get tired, they are flexible.

Interviewer: So you don't think a woman would have been doing the same job that Lemmer was? What is that Lemmer does that a woman wouldn't?

Sam: That killing and that snake scene, I don't think a woman would have dealt with it the way Lemmer did. [interviewee is referring to a scene where Emma is frightened by a snake that she finds in her room at the game reserve where they were living when conducting the investigation into her brother's disappearance. Lemmer is the one who kills the snake.]

Interviewer: Don't you feel like Meyer was trying to make it seem like Emma needs a male to protect her?

Sam: Sometimes these things come naturally and I didn't even think about the gender issues. I just thought it was the right thing to do.

Interviewer: For you as a woman are you satisfied with the way Emma is being depicted?

Sam: I am.

Interviewer: Even though the last half of the book she does not feature?

Sam: Yah, I am satisfied.

Interviewer: Do you think that the authors have captured the essence of South Africa's crime reality as you understand it?

Sam: He did. Those rich people would use the middle-class people like Eric and the crew to do their dirty work while those rich people are sitting in their offices just paying for everything.]Eric is one of the men sent as a hitman by Quintus Wernich, chairman of the board of Southern Cross Avionics, to assassinate Emma and Lemmer.]

Interviewer: What was your favourite part of the book and why?

Sam: I've got two. It's interesting that Lemmer could know that Steve Moller was lying, I couldn't understand how he knew it. [interviewee is referring to a scene when Lemmer was trying to figure out who actually knew of Emma's brother's whereabouts. He managed to corner Moller, who was Cobie's employer, and by studying his body language, he could tell that he was lying when he said he did not know where Cobie was.]

Interviewer: Any other scene?

Sam: The time he was killing those four guys.]interviewee is referring to scenes where Lemmer kills the assassins that were sent by Quintus Wernich, chairman of the board of Southern Cross Avionics, to murder him and Emma.]

Interviewer: So do you like the fact that he was smart in his killing?

Sam: Yes.

Interviewer: What did you not like about the book? Why?

Sam: When Lemmer was telling Emma some stories I just wish he explained what he told Emma. [interviewee is referring to a scene in the hospital where Lemmer is telling Emma about his past.]

Interviewer: So you feel the story was dragging there?

Sam: Yes.

Interviewer: What do you make of the conclusion? Was the ending to your satisfaction?

Sam: No, I don't understand what was parking at Lemmer's house and why did he run. [interviewee is referring to the end scene when Lemmer spots a vehicle which he believes is Emma's.]

Interviewer: In terms of how the mystery gets resolved, are you happy with that?

Sam: I feel they should told us how they dropped the case.]interviewee is referring to Cobie's murder case for he was charged with the murders of several Sangomas.]

Interviewer: The main conclusion? How Cobie was found and the reason why he was on the run?

Sam: In crime fiction, if everything is resolved in a way that people are free it takes your fright away.

Interview concluded.

APPENDIX B5: TRANSCRIPT 5

The following interview transcript is based on the "Engaging with Crime Fiction as a Literary Practice" research study. As required by the Ethics Committee the participant gave both verbal (audio recorded) as well as written permission to participate in the study. The participant requested that sections of the interview that reveal identity, or that the participant wishes not to occur, or that are not relevant to the research study's questions and/or objectives have been omitted. I as the researcher as well as the interviewer have noted all questions and responses relevant to the research study and for the purpose of being able to read clearly and coherently what was said, I have not recorded the pauses in speech or subtle alterations that the participant has made in mid speech e.g.:

Interviewer: Where do you live?

Participant (unedited response): Well, ahm, ahm, well, I … My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

Participant (edited response): My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

However, I should state for the record that the participant's words are not being substituted by synonyms and no phrases/words are being included in the participant's answers.

The participant's pseudonym is Dave and the participant is a 28-year-old coloured male reading towards a BA Hons (Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Politics) degree in his first year of the programme.

Interviewer: How long have you been a reader of crime fiction novels?

Dave: For about three years now.

Interviewer: Who or what made you to read crime fiction?

Dave: A good friend of mine introduced me to some book that I watched a movie of The Lincoln by Michael Connelly.

Interviewer: How did you feel about it? Describe your thoughts and emotions.

Dave: In the beginning I was quite hesitant because I didn't know what to expect but as the book went on I got so hooked to it that I couldn't get enough and I just wanted more. When I

finished it I wanted the next book and the next book. It happened to most crime fiction books that I read.

Interviewer: As you were reading it, were you thinking particular things or were you just going with the flow?

Dave: Because I watched the movie first, I found the book to have more detail and much broader and more interesting. It made me excited. It was a very thrilling experience.

Interviewer: Ever since that first novel, have you read a great deal more? For either yes or no explain.

Dave: I think I've read about 200 novels ever since then.

Interviewer: 200? Explain how?

Dave: I got more books and more books. My favourite is the Alex Cross series, I think the first book of that shocked me. I was like how could people write stuff like this about killing babies and kidnapping small children. I was horrified actually. But then it just got more interesting.

Interviewer: Do you prefer reading local and/or international crime fiction novels? Why?

Dave: Look, I had my first experience a couple of weeks back with local content but I am used to the American genre.

Interviewer: So you are saying you prefer international novels?

Dave: Yah, because I am used to it.

Interviewer: Can you think of another reason why you prefer international novels bearing in mind that you have only read one or two local books?

Dave: I think I haven't been exposed to much local content to give you a sophisticated answer to that.

Interviewer: As you were reading international content didn't you feel like maybe I can find something that is South African?

Dave: Yah I did. It's something that did cross my mind.

Interviewer: But it wasn't actually to an extent where you wanted to go to a library and find out whether there are local books?

Dave: If I had the time I would go find it.

Interviewer: Do you think marketing has anything to do with it?

Dave: Yah I do think that even that has something to do with it. If you go to the book shops you find like James Patterson books are there in front of the store but then you don't really see a South African novel here in front of the book shop where it's being advertised and marketed properly.

Interviewer: Would you say that you 'enjoy' crime fiction? Explain.

Dave: I love crime fiction. It's more than an enjoyment, I have a love for it.

Interviewer: So, by that do you mean you enjoy the gruesome crimes, shooting, violence, rape?

Dave: No, not more the violence and shooting kind of thing. It's more the way it unravels type of thing. Someone did something and people are after them and at the end the good always win but then, there's always something in his own personal life that is affected by the choices he made.

Interviewer: Do you think that crime novels give you as a reader a good idea of present day issues?

Dave: The local book I read, it actually does. It gives you a perspective on what's actually going on in society.

Interviewer: And the genre in general?

Dave: It does. It reflects on how society is in terms of women politics and how women are depicted in society and how children are depicted –how children are vulnerable.

Interviewer: When you say 'how women are depicted' what do you mean by that?

Dave: Like women are vulnerable, need protection.

Interviewer: Are there any issues that stand out for you or that you are hoping an author will write about, or is it all about entertainment?

Dave: I think it goes a bit beyond entertainment. If you look at how kids are being raped today –in the news 18-6 month old babies being raped – what does that say about society. Those things should actually be looked at in these books.

Interviewer: Do you consider reading crime novels a literary experience? Why?

Dave: Reading in general I find to be literature. It's just a more enjoyable form of literature. You learn from it, it improves your vocabulary, so I do consider it part of literature. You know where someone enjoys reading history, sociology, politics and psychology, crime fiction is also something that we can learn from.

Interviewer: How does your experience of reading crime fiction compare to other books that you might have read or that you still do read?

Dave: I find crime fiction to be more enjoyable. It's more captivating. You won't find me finishing a book in a day or two it will take me months to finish another book.

Interviewer: Which other genres do you read?

Dave: Academic reading, true life drama and usually motivational books I read a couple of chapters in the book but I don't finish it.

Interviewer: Which from the three South African novels that were selected for this research study did you read?

Dave: Roger Smith *Mixed Blood*

Interviewer: Could you relate to the novel? For either yes or no give a reason?

Dave: That novel was hectic. I find the novel very interesting. It's just the way it was set out and how society was depicted in South Africa. Yah, I could relate to it. Yah, you get your rich people on the mountain, your poor coloured people in the Cape Flats and yah I could relate to that. It's actually something I saw with my own eyes.

Interviewer: Do you think that the author has captured the essence of South Africa's crime reality as you understand it?

Dave: He has, because you get corrupt policemen that are also involved in crime these days.

Interviewer: Is that the only aspect of South Africa's crime reality that he has brought to your attention?

Dave: There is a lot more. If it is a poor person being killed, their case isn't really taken seriously or there isn't a lot of investigation done into the case.

Interviewer: What was your favourite part of the book and why?

Dave: My favourite part is where they burn that guy. [interviewee is referring to a scene where community members resort to mob justice and they set Barnard, a corrupt cop, alight.]

Interviewer: Why is that?

Dave: It was just funny.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel though?

Dave: It made me laugh. I found it hilarious. Because if you go back into South African history –during apartheid – and you found that there was a snitch selling out to the white government, then they will do that to you. So I found that quite ironic that they were doing it to a white man.

Interviewer: So it's the irony that made you laugh?

Dave: Yah.

Interviewer: But how come could you find such a gruesome crime in itself appealing though?

Dave: Because of the historical context that it comes from.

Interviewer: So for you it was a symbol of justice?

Dave: Yah, I believe mob justice is justice. If the cops can't give you justice then you have to use mob justice.

Interviewer: And what about the laws?

Dave: Well, if the laws are not working for you, well you have to do something. If those who are supposed to be applying the law are breaking the law, then what are you supposed to do?

Interviewer: So did you find that to be quite satisfying then?

Dave: Yah, it was a very funny thing.

Interviewer: What did you not like about the book? Why?

Dave: I actually enjoyed the whole book.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy the dialogue? Didn't you find certain parts of it offensive maybe?

Dave: Yah, some of the language is a bit harsh, but maybe the writer was in that context where he wrote it based on the research that he done.

Interviewer: Is that maybe one thing that you did not like about the book?

Dave: Yah, you can say that.

Interviewer: Did you have a sad moment in the book?

Dave: Yah, towards the end. I just don't like the way the book ended. I wanted to know more. [interviewee is referring to the time when Jack Burn is fleeing from the authorities and he gets into an accident.]

Interviewer: So was that more disappointment then sadness?

Dave: Yah.

Interviewer: So there wasn't a part where you felt despondent?

Dave: There's actually one scene where I found that it was quite sad. It's where this guy went to his wife in hospital and then she just said "just leave now". I found that –the guy's point of view – quite harsh. [interviewee is referring to the scene when Jack Burn's wife, Susan, was in hospital because of the trauma she sustained when their home was invaded by two gangsters. Susan is unhappy with their living conditions and Burn's constant lies and she tells him to leave.]

Interviewer: Why?

Dave: It's also his child and maybe he cares for the child and now she is pushing him away because of the mistakes he made.

Interviewer: Do you feel that men were depicted in a certain way versus women?

Dave: I found it to be a reality actually. Because you find that the chick that was smoking tik (what was her name?) she finds that the guy comes in and beats her up and she's used to it. [interviewee is referring to Carmen who was being constantly abused by her husband, one of the two gangsters that invaded the Burns' home, Rikki.]

Interviewer: But were you content with that? That men are being bullies or abusive rather?

Dave: It's reality.

Interviewer: Because it's reality does it make it right?

Dave: I never said it makes it right.

Interviewer: Do you think he could have played around with that? Switch it up a bit?

Dave: But then it would have not made the book real. It would have not hit home.

Interviewer: Because of you considering it to be reality, do you then say that it makes you consider your position more as a male within society?

Dave: Actually I think women abuse men more than men do. There was actually a research that proves that, but in a lot of cases where women are vulnerable men do abuse them. It makes me think of gender politics as a whole not just men abusing women, but women abusing men.

Interviewer: In terms of how he depicts women, do you think he's trying to empower women in this book? Because you have used the word 'vulnerable' a couple of times.

Dave: Yah, women are vulnerable in the book.

Interviewer: Would you have liked to see a strong woman character to counter balance the male aggression?

Dave: No, I think the book was fine just the way it was.

Interviewer: What do you make of the conclusion? Was the ending to your satisfaction?

Dave: No, absolutely not. I wanted to know. He just said 'and then he saw nothing'. Jack had to go to court or die.

Interviewer: Apart from the obvious resolving of a crime, were there any other resolutions that you took note of or that you would have like to see?

Dave: The American women, what happened to her when she went back to the States? [interviewee is referring to Susan who was criminally charged when she confessed to the officials about them being fugitives and Burn's criminal activities.]

Interviewer: But don't you think that was quite self-explanatory? She made a deal and she was going to be prosecuted.

Dave: Yah, but I wanted details you know.

Interviewer: What about Bennie Mongrel, the way the author wrote about his conclusion?

Dave: He had to take that puppy with. I think he would have been happy. [interviewee is referring to the scene where Bennie Mongrel, a security guard, sees a stray dog but he does not take it in. This happens after he had lost a dog that he had loved.]

Interview concluded.

APPENDIX B6: TRANSCRIPT 6

The following interview transcript is based on the "Engaging with Crime Fiction as a Literary Practice" research study. As required by the Ethics Committee the participant gave both verbal (audio recorded) as well as written permission to participate in the study. The participant requested that sections of the interview that reveal identity, or that the participant wishes not to occur, or that are not relevant to the research questions and/or objectives have been omitted. I as the researcher as well as the interviewer have noted all questions and responses relevant to the research study and for the purpose of being able to read clearly and coherently what was said, I have not recorded the pauses in speech or subtle alterations that the participant has made in mid speech e.g.:

Interviewer: Where do you live?

Participant (unedited response): Well, ahm, ahm, well, I … My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

Participant (edited response): My mom and I live in Johannesburg.

However, I should state for the record that the participant's words are not being substituted by synonyms and no phrases/words are being included in the participant's answers.

The participant's pseudonym is Jen and the participant is a 39-year-old white female reading towards a MA (Masters of Arts in Applied English Language Studies) degree in her final year of the programme.

Interviewer: How long have you been a reader of crime fiction novels?

Jen: Look I'm 39 now. I've been reading for most of my life. One of the earliest one that I can remember is Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys.

Interviewer: Who or what made you to read crime fiction?

Jen: My mother's preferred genre was thrillers and crime novels. I started leaning more towards crime fiction when I was in high school. One of the earlier ones that I can remember reading is the *Dead Zone* by Stephen King.

Interviewer: How did you feel about it? Describe your thoughts and emotions.

Jen: I was utterly gripped, in most crime novels you have a mystery to be solved by the good people who have to be cleverer than the bad people.

Interviewer: Did it fascinate you?

Jen: It probably. You must understand though that I read everything I laid my eyes on.

Interviewer: Do you prefer reading local and/or international crime fiction novels? Why?

Jen: I don't really discriminate as far as that goes. Obviously with the local ones it's slightly more tricky because there not that many of them. What tends to happen with me is that when I like an author I will read everything that author has ever written. Deon Meyer I have read almost every single of his books. Now that I have a kindle I am starting to collect books by authors. The greater number of books per author that I have, Steven King and Ed McBane.

Interviewer: So it is the international market that appeals to you?

Jen: Yah.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Jen: I've transferred most of my reading to my kindle now. I understand that I have got the best of both worlds in the sense that I can read books that are both in print and electronic. But of course if you're buying over Amazon and you are searching for books in a particular genre, the ones that are going to come up the most often are going to be the international ones unless you search by author specifically.

Interviewer: So you have been dictated to?

Jen: Yah, almost. Unless I go to the library in which case I will look for authors.

Interviewer: But then do you feel like the libraries that you go to do they try to steer you towards the local genre or are they similar to what you will find on the internet?

Jen: I almost think that's absolutely right. If I think about the last time I visited my library, I don't ever recall seeing a display by South African authors.

Interviewer: Would you say that you 'enjoy' crime fiction? Explain.

Jen: Oh, yes! It's my go to genre.

Interviewer: Do you really enjoy the blood, the shooting, does it appeal to you??

Jen: Dude I'm South African, I think we are all very numb to it. The thing with the book though you can choose what kind of image you want to flower in your mind. For things that I would find truly disturbing, I would just skip over that.

Interviewer: Do you skip over the gruesome scenes?

Jen: It depends how graphic the detail is.

Interviewer: How do you know unless you've read it?

Jen: This is one of my vices, I tend to reread books. I have books that I have adored reading and I have read them so often that the cover has fallen off. The first time it's kind of oh, and then the second time you skip. Sometimes you can tell what's coming and then you read a little bit more superficially. You don't linger over the description. I tell you what does disturb me is sexual violence.

Interviewer: What is it that you think makes you enjoy these books?

Jen: I think it's more about the mystery. It's about who did it, and are they going to get caught. Maybe it's as easy as good guy after bad guy and that satisfying thing where good usually triumphs.

Interviewer: Do you think that crime novels as a reader give you a good idea of present day issues?

Jen: Yes, and no. If I think about (*Blood Safari* by Deon Meyer) I think that it brought up a whole lot of stuff that is incredibly South African and very pertinent, and I think that not a whole lot of people have talked about. Things like identity and languages, or things like friendship between black and white. If I think about (Ed McBane) there was a definitely a progression. So I think it reflects what is happening in the broader environment, like criminal issues and concerns.

Interviewer: Are there any issues that stand out for you, or that you are hoping that an author will write about?

Jen: I think that crime fiction has a very fine line that it needs to walk between being to socially conscious, and being pure entertainment. Because you don't really want to pick up a

crime novel that is dealing with deep issues. Because sometimes you just want to pick up a book with a little bit of fluff to read for entertainment purposes. I don't know to be honest with you.

Interviewer: You don't pick up a book hoping that he/she is gonna cover misogyny or corruption?

Jen: No. I would pick up the book and think to myself 'I really hope that I can't see who the killer is by the second chapter'.

Interviewer: It's the thrill of it, isn't it?

Jen: It is the thrill of it.

Interviewer: Do you consider reading crime novels a literary experience? Why?

Jen: Of course!

Interviewer: Why?

Jen: Hang on, define literary for me. (Laughter) Yes I do because it might not necessarily be Shakespeare But when you consider the issues that Shakespeare is engaging with, it's because Shakespeare is 400 years old that we consider him to be great literature. At the time when he was writing, he was not writing for the upper-class, he was writing for everyday people.

Interviewer: People that will say that it's not a literary experience one of their main concerns is the generic nature of crime novels. Do you think that's a non-factor?

Jen: Isn't everything generic? Who was it that said to me that there are really nine plots ever and every single book is a variation on one of those nine.

Interviewer: Can we then say that the literary experience is one that you engage with because you enjoy it and you get satisfaction from it and you also deal with issues?

Jen: Absolutely. And I tell you what else, if you are part of a book club then you also get to discuss stuff with people who read the same book. That's kind a taking it to the next level as well. I wonder if maybe part of the definition of literary is, would we be reading this kind of fiction or these authors in 200 to 400 years time?

Interviewer: How does your experience of reading crime fiction compare to other books that you might have read or that you still do read?

Jen: For me reading crime fiction is escapism. It's like having tea and cake with a very good friend where you don't have to hide who you are. The relationship is so familiar that you can just relax into it whereas sometimes with other books, unfamiliar authors, unfamiliar genres, it's a good experience to read it but it's like a shoe that needs to get comfortable.

Interviewer: So you don't like the book that unsettles you?

Jen: No it is not about unsettling. It is about how much work do I have to do to get into that book.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you have to work to read a book or you don't actually have to?

Jen: It depends how interested I am in the subject. It depends on the author. It depends on the book. It depends on the genre.

Interviewer: So you read *Blood Safari*?

Jen: Yes I did for the second time. Love it. It was the first Deon Meyer book I read.

Interviewer: Could you relate to the novel? For either yes or no give a reason?

Jen: I thought it was incredibly interesting. Yes I could. I couldn't relate to Emma because that kind of person small and courageous and dangling men from her finger tips, that's not me. But the way Deon Meyer constructs his characters is indescribably detailed and authentic. I could relate to the circumstances in the book because again it was familiar.

Interviewer: And as a white South African woman? Do you feel that women were put into this neat little box where they have to be viewed from a particular perspective or do you think he let loose, he was like, let me challenge current views on women?

Jen: Only a little bit. The reason why I say that is all of his women are sexually very open. That for me, I don't know, is that unusual female behavior? Is that like a conservative white Afrikaaner type of behavior? I don't know. It's not something I will ever do.

Interviewer: So did you find it hard to grapple with.

Jen: Not then, now that I am thinking about it. I think that it's interesting that every single female character in that book was so free and easy with their sexuality.

Interviewer: But then would you say that they were outwardly free or was it a matter of when they found themselves in an intimate space they want to reveal?

Jen: I think there was more intimacy between Emma and Lemmer. But in the sense of a free spirited person who lives with a man for 6/7/8 years, and then can't be celibate for 6 months. I'm not sure how realistic that is. (interviewee is referring to Mona the hairdresser, Lemmer's ex-girlfriend whom he was telling Emma had an obsession with sex).

Interviewer: But do you think sex is a conservative issue though?

Jen: I tell you for Afrikaaners …

Interviewer: Don't you think it's a matter of they talk about it conservatively but what goes on behind closed doors …

Jen: Is an entirely different story. Yah.

Interviewer: Think of that old lady that he's friends with, she told him about this affair she used to have, but outwardly the community thought that the priest is such a humble man. [interviewer is referring to Antjie, Lemmer's neighbor, who told him that she once had an affair with a priest during her stay in the Free State].

Jen: Maybe what's he doing is exposing the taboo.

Interviewer: Do you feel that as a woman Emma had to get a male body-guard?

Jen: Yes that's interesting isn't it, because, it goes to the stereotype. Yes and no. Don't you think that body-guards are these Sylvester Stallone types? This is what we assume what Lemmer is until right towards the end of the book when Emma is in a coma and Lemmer is busy telling her about his family history and the fact that he is small and ginger and not very attractive and not very strong, that turns that stereotype upside down.

Interviewer: But don't you think that is making Emma seem a bit meek by having a male to look after her instead of a woman? Don't you feel as a woman couldn't he have chosen a woman? What about Jeanette?

Jen: Hmm..

Interviewer: Does Lemmer do something extraordinary that a woman would not be able to do?

Jen: No, he doesn't. But if you think of the occupation of a body-guard, it's traditionally a male occupation.

Interviewer: So why not challenge that?

Jen: I wonder how much of that is also because Deon Meyer is challenging some other stuff. He is already challenging the notion of what a good guy really is because Lemmer is not necessarily a good guy. He's got lots of shadows. I wonder how far he wants to take the challenge because some of the things that are raised in Blood Safari challenge our perception of South Africa. You is already raising the whole unspoken black-white tension where the race card is ever present. He's already challenging the whole idea of poaching.

Interviewer: But aren't we dealing with those issues as is? Aren't they there in newspapers, discussions in lecture halls?

Jen: Yes and so by including that in a detective novel where we have already ascertained that, that particular genre has a formula to which it is written. Isn't that challenging the very formula of the detective story?

Interviewer: So you have no qualms with Emma being depicted in a soft way?

Jen: I know she doesn't turn around and fight the guys who initially break into her house. She runs next door and asks for help from a man. She gets a male body-guard.

Interviewer: Are you okay with that?

Jen: I don't want to seem disingenuous, but I don't know if I am okay with that because if I had been in Emma's position and I had opened the door to see a female body-guard in front of me, I would like to see some proof that she is able to defend me.

Interviewer: But she is willing to trust a body-guard without a gun.

Jen: Yes and I will tell you why. It's the same dynamic when I go get new tires or a new battery for my car, it's the same dynamic that makes me want to take one of my male cousins with me. Because as a female in certain environments, I get the short end of the stick because people assume I don't know anything.

Interviewer: Let me ask you this. You read Stieg Larsson don't you?

Jen: Yes.

Interviewer: Don't you think Emma could have done with a Lisbeth? (interviewer is referring to a character created by Stieg Larsson who appears in the Millennium series).

Jen: Yes, but then I wonder how much of that would have detracted from the other stuff that I think Deon Meyer wanted to put across in his book.

Interviewer: Do you think that the author has captured the essence of South Africa's crime reality as you understand it?

Jen: Yes and no. I think he's captured the whole poaching thing really, really well and brought nuances to that in sense it is all very well and good for people in comfortable houses with enough food to turn around and say "oh people should not do that". But for me what was tricky you can't really see a white South African magnate being big bad wolf behind the scenes and causing issues. For me, I get it, that yes it probably happens, I mean what do I know about South African big business, I'm in education.

Interviewer: What was your favourite part of the book and why?

Jen: Towards the end where you had two stories going at the same time. You heard Cobies's story and that was interspersed with what was happening in the present day, what Lemmer was busy doing. That I loved because I just thought that was so cleverly put together in terms of writing structure. What else I loved was when Lemmer had to speak to Emma when she was in a coma and we found out his background. It is pretty late in the book. You know up until that point we've drawn a whole lot of conclusions about his background.

Interviewer: What did you not like about the book? Why?

Jen: I would have liked Captain Jack Phatudi's character to be fleshed a bit more. He was angry all the time, I get that, but I thought he was a really interesting character. I would have liked a lot more interaction between him and Lemmer.

Interviewer: What do you make of the conclusion? Was the ending to your satisfaction?

Jen: At least you don't have them driving off in a clouded dust into the sunset I like that. The fact that it is a hint, rather than a certainty. Apart from that too convenient single master mind

behind the scenes, I like the fact that Jacobus did turn out to be Emma's brother. I liked his story that was very satisfyingly concluded. In terms of the last few pages, I like that Lemmer tries to go back to living his life.

Interviewer: And how about how the crimes were resolved?

Jen: Yah, just again that small annoyance of the master mind. Yes, overall, I think Deon Meyer did an incredibly good job of tying up a fair amount of complex loose ends. It was plausible.

Interviewer: So you were satisfied with Lemmer killing all those guys?

Jen: I think it was bound to happen. We'd had hints of his propensity to violence the whole way through the book.

Interviewer: Apart from the obvious resolving of a crime, were there any other resolutions that you took note of or that you would have like to see?

Jen: I'm kind of a bit sorry that Jacobus's fury and killing of the poachers that, that kind of got swept under the carpet, he got off there a little bit.

Interviewer: That's all?

Jen: Hmm, I would have liked to see that explored in a little more detail.

Interview concluded.

APPENDIX C1:FIRST CRIME FICTION NOTICE

I LOVE CRIME

FICTION NOVELS!!!

Would you like to be a part of a research study group for my research project? I am looking for avid readers of crime fiction or just people that are new to the genre but who love reading for enjoyment to form part of a reading group.

Please contact me via e-mail or call/SMS me if you are keen and I will give you more information.

Cell: 072 719 1987 E-mail: Melusi.ncala@students.wits.ac.za

****

IF YOU DON'T….I W-I-L-L F-I-N-D Y-O-U!!! ☺☺

APPENDIX C2: SECOND CRIME FICTION NOTICE

WANTED

FOR

SERIOUS CRIME

FICTION READING

I am looking for a group of persons who are readers of detective novels, mystery novels, thrillers, whodunits, cozies, courtroom dramas, forensics and all other subgenres that fall under the genre of crime fiction. If you would like to participate in Wits' first virtual book club for my research please contact me on 072 719 1987 or melusi.ncala@students.wits.ac.za

It is all about fun and your confidentiality is guaranteed.

APPENDIX D1:PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT LETTER

Dear Student

My name is Melusi Ncala and I am registered for a MA by dissertation in AELS (Applied English Language Studies) degree at the school of Education. The title of my dissertation is: Engaging With Crime Fiction As A Literary Practice. Prof Elsie Cloete is my supervisor.

Participation is open to all (undergraduate and postgraduate) registered students at the University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to invite you to participate if you are interested in crime fiction novels. Participation involves answering questions in an audio recorded interview regarding what draws you to the genre. An online book club will also be formed wherein discussions will be held relating to crime fiction in general and also three South African novels. The online group will be a private Facebook group. This is a study that has not been done before at Wits and the data could be useful in terms of curriculum design and further library acquisitions. A copy of my dissertation may be stored in the Library once I have graduated.

Participation is entirely voluntary and anonymity is guaranteed as no names will appear on the interview scripts. I intend keeping the interview scripts safely until the completion of my project whereupon I will destroy the data. The interview should take about 20 minutes. You are welcome to withdraw from completing the interview at any time and you may decline to answer a particular question or being an active member on the virtual book club.

If you do decide to participate I shall need you to sign a Consent Form as part of the requirements of ethical conduct.

Yours sincerely

Melusi Ncala
Tel. 072 719 1987
Email: Melusi.ncala@students.wits.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

I, …….. hereby consent to being a participant as an interviewee and/or member of a virtual book club regarding my interest in crime fiction novels as part of a MA by dissertation in AELS research being conducted by Melusi Ncala.

I am aware that participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I may also decline to answer specific questions. I acknowledge that there is no immediate benefit to my participation.

Signature: Date:

APPENDIX D2: ETHICS CLEARANCE

Wits School of Education

27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193 Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 717-3064 Fax: +27 11 717-3100 E-mail: enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za Website: www.wits.ac.za

Student Number: 295423
Protocol Number: **2013ECE136M**

Date: 12 August 2013

Dear Melusi Ncala

Application for Ethics Clearance: MA by dissertation in Applied English Language Studies

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

Engaging with Crime Fiction as a Literary Practice

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that clearance was granted.

Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page.

The Protocol Number above should be submitted to the Graduate Studies in Education Committee upon submission of your final research report.

All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely

Matsie Mabeta
Wits School of Education
011 717 3416

CC Supervisor: Prof. E Cloete